

# **THE ROLE OF CIVIL DEFENCE ORGANISATIONS IN NATIONAL SECURITY**

## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the national goals for Uganda's vision 2025 is national security. This vision is a strategic framework for national development. There can never be any meaningful development in any nation if there is no security. One of the aspirations of this vision is reflected in the desire to see stability and total peace established in this country.

National security is a broad concept. It encompasses peace and stability, good governance, dealing with crime and disorder, disaster management, regional and international relations and many other issues that touch on the well-being of citizens such as justice, the rule of law, human rights economic emancipation and democracy. All these are issues of national security.

National security is therefore, concerned with the establishment, advancement and enhancement of peace and stability, order and adherence to the rule of law, good governance, and pursuit of peaceful means to conflict resolution and co-existence, internally, regionally and internationally.

According to Article 17 of the constitution, it is the duty of every citizen to play a significant role in national security. However, the cardinal responsibility of national security is placed in the hands of specific institutions and organs such as the Uganda People's Defence Forces (articles 208 and 209), the Uganda Police Force (articles 211 and 212), intelligence services (article 218), National Security Council (articles 219 and 220), the Parliament and Civil Defence organisations.

Civil Defence organizations are those organizations that support the national security institutions such as the armed forces and intelligence organizations. They are community or civilian based security entities that are usually formed to deal with specific security or national emergencies such as disasters. They compliment the work of national security organizations. They may be or may not be in the national legislations. As such, they are supervised by the established national security institutions such as the army, the police or civil political agencies.

These civil organizations in Uganda include, the Local Defence Unit (LDU), Crime Preventors, the private security companies, and during insurgency in the North we had the Amukas, and Arrow boys.

**Civil defence** is a concept that enjoins all our national security resources to work in a united partnership with civil defence organisations with the focus placed on solving problems consistent with the community's expectations in addition to enforcing the laws.

This strategy is about security at its most important and challenging levels – in neighbourhoods and communities. It is about a new philosophy and practice i.e, one that encourages collaboration with the community and other agencies and organizations that are responsible for community safety.

This strategy is also aimed at maintaining a capable and focused security towards addressing crucial issues. These include policing in post – insurgency areas, developing popular intelligence support (**popular vigilance**) to support intelligence gathering, responding to national disasters such as floods, supporting the under strength security institutions and fighting insurgency and crime prevention.

In its intrinsic value Civil defence represents a fundamental shift in the basic role of the established national security organisation to develop new partnerships with key elements of the community. In short it is decentralising security to the basic manageable units of society.

## **THE ROLE OF CIVIL DEFENCE ORGANISATIONS**

### **1. FOCUSED LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Responding to criminal (or non- – criminal) incidents and enforcing the law are the unique responsibility of the Police. That does not change under in Civil defence. Focused law enforcement means being more mission – driven, giving top priority to the most serious crimes as well as those civic types that most concern a particular community. The objective of civil defence is to help communities fight crime. Our efforts as national security organization are geared towards stimulation of public enthusiasm to participate in activities that promote crime prevention.

## **2. INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT**

It generates **POPULAR INTELLIGENCE**. This is the information that is developed into intelligence that is willingly provided by people. In situations where the national security organisations do not reach the population or where the population feel more at ease with the local enforcement people, Civil defence organizations help in passing vital information and intelligence to the national security organizations..

## **3. COUNTER INSURGENCY**

Civil defence organizations help in situations of insurgency such as the one experienced in Northern Uganda. Where as it is fundamentally the role of the Police and other security organs deal with internal security, there is need to involve Civil Defence initiatives for effective management of such insurgencies. This does not only legitimize the need to deal with insurgence but also helps in providing the necessary personnel resources to deal with the situation. The war in Northern Uganda would have taken longer had the Government not enlisted the services of militias such as the Arrow and the Amuka.

## **4. NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIPS**

This is where, Police officers and community residents, work together to change those conditions that allow crime and disorder to take place. The partnership effort between the Police and Crime preventors is a case in point. The strategic objective is to maximize the coordination, cooperation, and communication with government agencies, community service providers, and neighbourhood and community groups.

## **5. EMPOWERMENT.**

Empowerment includes the delegation of the authority and responsibility necessary to identify and resolve those public safeties related issues confronting our communities through training and community involvement. An empowered community shares the responsibility for crime prevention and

increases problem solving approaches to reduce the crime incidence and other national security matters. This does not only help reduce insecurity but also increases patriotism.

## **6. ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS.**

Civil defence organisations have got auxiliary and specific powers to arrest any person who has committed a crime and produce him to the police and other security agencies for further legal action. By doing this, they contribute to national security by ensuring the observation of law and order, justice and creation of peace and stability in society.

## **7. PREVENTION AND DETECTION OF CRIME**

Crime prevention is the anticipation, recognition and appraisal of a crime risk and the initiation of pre-emptive action to remove or reduce it. Crime is a big destabilizing factor in national security in particular and development in general. Civil defence organization such as PSOs play a big role in prevention and detection of crime. They are highly visible e.g. through patrols and guards, and some also conduct investigations.

## **8. CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND RESPONSE TO NATIONAL DISASTERS.**

Civil defence organisations play a vital role in conflict resolution. This may be at personal, family, regional, national or international levels. At personal levels, many conflicts between individuals are on day-to-day basis resolved by them in their respective areas of jurisdiction.

Family differences have a tendency of a destabilizing factor if not properly handled in society. They usually lead to murders, family break ups, street children, and general insecurity if not resolved at an early stage. Some organizations like the LDU help in responding to family issues in conjunction with the LCs and the police.

At national level, they have been involved in settlement of tribal, clan, religions and political conflicts. The role of civil defence in conflict resolution in Karamoja region and Northern Uganda can not be over-emphasized. This has had a significant impact in attaining national security.

It is also worthy noting that their role in responding to national disasters e.g. earthquakes, floods, road accidents and fire out- breaks contributes significantly to national security and development.

## **9. GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY**

Last but not least, the role of civil defence in elections and campaigns both at national and local level ensures that good governance and democracy are attained. These are important benchmarks for national security.

If they do not play an honest role in ensuring that elections are free and fair and law and order prevails during electioneering, then good governance and democracy which are a prerequisite for development will never be attained.

### **CONCLUSION**

This is by far not an exhaustive account of the role of civil defence organisations in promotion of national security. But it provides the major aspects of it. It is imperative to note that the police and other national security organisations do not work alone in fulfilling their mandate. It requires co-operation, good coexistence and mutual understanding with other security of organs, civil defence and the public generally if we are to be successful in contributing positively to national security. We however, need to regulate them especially in managing the flow of information and intelligence and also importantly in upholding and respecting human rights.