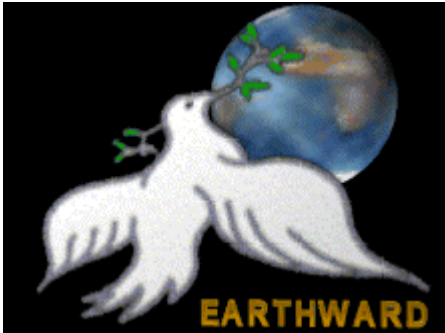

EARTHWARD

Edition 1 Summer 2005



*“Turn your vision earthward...
‘Tis we must lend a hand.”*

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EARTHWARD Launches Newsletter

This is the first edition of EARTHWARD’s Newsletter. We hope you will enjoy it. We plan to publish new editions quarterly. You can view or download our newsletters, in various formats, at <http://earthward.org/nldl.shtml>. If you would like to receive our Newsletter by email, please subscribe by sending email to NLsub@earthward.org, and indicating what format (MS-Word, Adobe Acrobat or HTML) you would like to receive.

Mission Statement

EARTHWARD is a non-profit, non-political, non-membership public-benefit charity organization that provides humanitarian relief aid to civilian victims of religiously motivated violence ranging from acts of violence by individual extremists or terrorist organizations that claim religious justification for their actions to full-scale holy wars waged by religiously dominated governments.

Typically, aid is provided in a form dictated by the particular needs of the victims. Some examples are food, water, temporary shelter and medical supplies.

It should not be misconstrued that our aid in any way constitutes endorsement of the political, religious or ideological views of recipient victims, or condemnation of those of their assailants. We do, however, vigorously oppose violent means of achieving any objective and emphatically reject any attempts to justify such violent actions on religious grounds.

Our **Most Urgent** Project

Help a family who has fled the Lord's Resistance Army

Imagine that you are in a foreign land, with no hope of returning home, and no right to seek employment. Fleeing your homeland was the only way of protecting your family from the band of armed thugs who invaded your village, and who would stop at nothing to realize their agenda to turn your country into a fundamentalist bible-based theocracy.

This is the life of Peter Okello (To protect the privacy of the family concerned, fictitious names are used in reference to all members of that family.) and his family. In his own words:



The Okello Family

I am a refugee living in Kenya with my wife, Elizabeth, my daughters, Celine (15), Alicia (11), Amy (7), and my sons, Edmond (13) and Mick (4). We fled Uganda and arrived in Kenya four years ago. The main reason for us fleeing Uganda was an attack by the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) on our village in Otwal, Northern Uganda. In that attack, in September 1999, we lost my late brother, Joseph, and Anna, daughter of my sister, Sarah, who were abducted by the LRA. Nothing is known of Anna's fate. Joseph's body was found in a potato plantation, two weeks after the LRA invasion, totally decomposed.

Unfortunately, our application to register as refugees was not successful in Kenya. This resulted in the UN office in Nairobi counting us out of any assistance they otherwise could have extended to us! I was sentenced to two years in prison, for working and living in Kenya illegally. The jailing was instigated by a powerful Christian lady, from a highly influential family in a Christian ministry, connected to the present Vice President of Kenya. I served 16 months before being released in September 2002.

I have also done some odd simple jobs, such as driving, cleaning, guarding and gardening. Yet we hunger, live in fear and great lack. We have no food, and the water we use is not safe, in fact many times the impure unsafe water mixes with sewage waste water! We have not paid a rent amount coming up to 14,800 Kenya shillings; as the new month comes we have no direction on this. My malaria symptoms do not seem too bad at the moment, but I do think that I still need a medical examination to be sure I am okay.



On April 20, 2005, in collaboration with the [Uganda Humanist Association \(UHAsso\)](http://www.earthward.org/phase23.shtml), EARTHWARD sent emergency supplies to the Okellos, using \$250 US of donated funds that were already available. Included were water, food and medicine.

The supplies we already sent Peter and his family will certainly help for a short time, but they will not last long. At present, we have no funds available for further aid to the Okellos. **Whether or not this family will have enough to eat next month, depends on the generosity and compassion of people like you.** Any amount you may wish to contribute will be greatly appreciated. Our ultimate goal,

in this project, is to help the Okello family return to full self-sufficiency. In the meantime, the Okellos will have priority for any donations you make to our Africa Fund. If donations exceed the amount needed by this family, second priority will be for other families and individuals, in Africa, facing similar circumstances. To donate, please visit:

<http://www.earthward.org/phase23.shtml>

Bulletin: EARTHWARD sends additional US\$100 for the Okellos on June 16, 2005.

RELIGIOUS FANATICS FORCE AN UGANDAN FAMILY INTO EARTHLY HELL

Mr. Deogratias Ssekitooleko, Chairman of the Uganda Humanist Association, who visited the Okello family in April 2005, has written a shocking account of their tragic ordeal and hellish circumstances. Here is an excerpt:

The Okello family lives in a very dirty suburb within Nairobi city. They stay in one small room on the fifth floor of a big dilapidated building. The whole

environment is disease infested. I was told that several people had died of cholera and typhoid. I could hardly find a functioning toilet to use. Water in the building looks to be contaminated and life here is indeed 'hellish'! It is not a home fit for human beings, especially those ever smiling children of the Okellos'.

Please find the full text of Mr. Ssekitooleko's article here:

<http://earthward.org/hell.shtml>

This is a very real family in a very real crisis. Please help if you can.

Our Other Current Projects

[Help victims of witchhunts, victims of the Hindu caste system, and discarded child "goddesses" in Nepal.](http://earthward.org/human.shtml)

(<http://earthward.org/human.shtml>)

[Help victims of Shariah, and surviving family members of victims of ritual killings in Nigeria.](http://earthward.org/nhm.shtml)

(<http://earthward.org/nhm.shtml>)

Some of our Past Projects

Iraq Desk Project:

EARTHWARD played a small part in helping to arrange the delivery of over 100 desk sets to the Hatim Al Hathal school for Shia children in the Hatim Al Hathal village in Iraq. This village is in the Sunni Triangle, where Shia are culturally disadvantaged and where sectarian violence, between Sunnis and Shia, is rampant. Previously, desks had been shared, four students to each desk.

India Tracy Project

In 2003, a 14-year-old girl named India Tracy was bullied and physically assaulted by other students at Horace Maynard Middle School in Union, Tennessee because her family is Pagan. Her parents sued the school for both failing to protect her and for punishing India for not participating in religious events.

Earthward solicited donations and sent 100% of those funds to the India Tracy Legal and Educational Fund. A settlement has been reached, by which the Union County School District is paying

the costs for Tracy's education at another school.

Other past projects:

In the past, we have also given to organizations that are not formally affiliated with us, such as the IHEU (International Humanist and Ethical Union) and the BAOBAB (a women's organization in Nigeria) when they've solicited donations for specific causes that fall within our mission. In the case of BAOBAB, EARTHWARD made a small contribution toward their goal of legally defending Amina Lawal in Nigeria against charges of adultery under Shariah Law. Amina Lawal had been facing the death penalty, but has since been acquitted. EARTHWARD also made a few small contributions to the IHEU's fund to help Dr. Younus Shaikh in Pakistan, who was imprisoned for blasphemy and appealing a possible death sentence. Fortunately, Dr. Shaikh was also set free. We had sent money to the 911 Disaster Relief Fund and related charities after the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2001.

Our Affiliates

Sisi Kwa Sisi, our affiliate from Tanzania, has brought to our attention the suffering of many in that nation as a result of religious/superstitious practices as the murder of "witches" and the ritual use of human skin. More information is here: <http://www.earthward.org/sks.shtml>

The Humanists Association of Nepal (HUMAN) helps victims of witchhunts, victims of the Hindu caste system, and the discarded Kumari child "goddesses". You may read more about that here: <http://www.earthward.org/human.shtml>.

The Humanist Association of Nigeria (HAN), (formerly the Nigerian Humanist Movement), is helping victims of Shariah Law and ritual killings. You may read more about that here: <http://www.earthward.org/nhm.shtml>

The Ugandan Humanists Association (UHAsso) has helped us immensely in executing our plan to deliver emergency aid to the Okello family, refugees of the Lord's Resistance Army. We are pleased to announce that in the course of that project UHAsso and EARTHWARD have reached agreement to affiliate.

FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

Q: What is EARTHWARD?

A: We are an atheist/agnostic run non-profit charity created to provide humanitarian relief to victims of religiously motivated violence. We are incorporated as a non-profit organization in the state of Nevada in the USA, but we are an international organization.

Q: How can I help?

A: Non-theists, with a little spare time and a fervent desire to help those less fortunate, are welcome to join us as volunteers. A wide variety of roles are needed. Those who wish to contribute financially, are invited to donate to our general fund, or to a specific project. We invite organizations, with goals common to EARTHWARD, to work with us, as an affiliate. All three of these options are described in more detail at:

<http://earthward.org/getinvolved.shtml>

Other questions addressed in our [online FAQ](http://earthward.org/faq.html) (<http://earthward.org/faq.html>) are:

Q: Why do you call yourselves EARTHWARD?

Q: Do you only help atheists?

Q: Do officers draw salaries?

Q: Why are you run only by atheists/agnostics?

Q: Do you proselytize to victims?

Q: How do you determine whether an act of violence is religiously motivated?

Q: But this is such a big problem! Aren't your goals too ambitious?

EARTHWARD History Highlights

April 1999: A project was launched at GodBusters to explore the possibility of forming an international non-theist charity organization. (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/nogod/>)

May 1999: It was decided to name the new organization EARTHWARD (Earth's Atheist Resistance To Holy Wars And Religious Devastation).

April 2000: After having participated in our board election, contributed to the writing of our bylaws, and assisted in our incorporation effort, our Vice-Chair, Jyoti Shankar, suddenly died from a heart attack. We were deeply saddened by the loss of our friend and comrade.

June 2000: EARTHWARD was officially founded, and incorporated in Iowa, USA.

July 2000: A new Vice-Chair was elected.

October 2000: We contributed to the IHEU managed defense fund of Dr. Yunis Shaikh, who was facing a possible death sentence for blasphemy in Pakistan. He was later freed.

September 2001: We were horrified to learn of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. That event, more than anything else, reminded us of the importance of our goals. We sent money to the 911 Disaster Relief Fund and related charities.

March 2003: HUMAN, HUMANist Association of Nepal, affiliated with EARTHWARD. We sent them funds for activities such as investigations and aid to victims of witch-hunts.

April 2003: EARTHWARD was incorporated in Nevada, US. We also sent funds to the India Tracy Education and Legal Trust Fund in Knoxville, Tennessee, US.

May 2003: We sent funds to BAOBAB, a Nigerian women's organization, for their legal aid to Amina Lawal, a woman appealing a death sentence for adultery, per Sharia Law.

July 2003: The (former) Nigerian Humanist Movement, now called the Humanist Association of Nigeria, joined us as an affiliate organization.

September, 2003: We sent more funds for Amina Lawal, who won her appeal.

October, 2003: We sent funds to our affiliate in Nigeria to help victims of ritual killings.

November, 2003: EARTHWARD acquired tax exempt status in the US. In addition, we sent funds to HUMAN to help victims of the Hindu caste system. We also began to assist in the project to bring school furniture to Hatim Al Hathal in Iraq.

December 2003: Sisi Kwa Sisi in Tanzania joined us as an affiliate organization.

August 2004: The school furniture for Hatim Al Hathal arrives in Iraq.

April 2005: We sent funds to the Uganda Humanist Association to help a refugee family fleeing the Lord's Resistance Army.

EARTHWARD is Seeking Volunteers

What we expect from our volunteers:

- 1- All volunteers must sign a simple Affirmation of Commitment attesting to their solidarity with EARTHWARD goals, and their intention to uphold EARTHWARD's policies, while acting on its behalf, for the duration of their voluntary service.
- 2- Volunteers join our email list to discuss EARTHWARD activities.
- 3- Volunteers are expected to keep in regular contact with Board members.
- 4- While we fully accept that our volunteers' private and professional lives must take priority, and never pressure them to accept more tasks than they are comfortable with, once a task is accepted, we expect it to be carried out. In the event that extenuating circumstances prevent a task's completion, we will assign it to someone else, but we must be kept informed.

Current volunteer opportunities:

Among a wide variety of roles, we are especially seeking a Treasurer, a Newsletter editor, web developers, writers and fundraisers. Any eligible volunteer willing to read the email list, keep in regular contact with the Board, and contribute an occasional idea is also welcome.

If you are interested in volunteering, either visit our Get Involved page at <http://www.earthward.org/getinvolved.shtml> or send email to pr@earthward.org.

Our Motto

We, at EARTHWARD, could not be more pleased with our motto. It is an excerpt from a poem written in 1890 by Samuel P. Putnam, Secretary of the Secular Union of New York, at that time. That it coincidentally contains the name of our organization is only a small part of its appeal. This phrase in particular, and the poem in general, perfectly describe the motives that drive us to do what we do.

Turn your vision earthward --

'Tis we must lend a hand.

The entire poem can be found here: <http://earthward.org/motto.shtml>