

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Questions

- 1. Please provide information on the situation in Gulu and the activities of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) there.**
- 2. The US DoS has reported that there were no reports of LRA attacks in 2007. Is this consistent with other country information?**
- 3. Have there been any reports of LRA attacks in 2008? If so, where did they take place?**
- 4. Does the LRA have a presence or engage in activity in Kampala in particular?**
- 5. Does the LRA engage in activity in Jinja?**
- 6. To what extent do the authorities provide citizens with protection against attack by the LRA?**
- 7. Please provide information on the recruitment methods used by the LRA.**

RESPONSE

- 1. Please provide information on the situation in Gulu and the activities of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) there.**

A search of the sources consulted found little detailed information about the situation in the Gulu district, but found a number of articles which mention the situation in northern Uganda more generally.

An article dated 29 November 2007 in *The Economist* observed that:

northern Uganda is beginning to return to something approaching normality after the end, it is hoped, of the LRA’s 20-year insurgency against the government. Peace talks between the two sides have encouraged some of the 1m-odd people displaced by the conflict to leave their

refugee camps and return to rebuild their villages. Curfews have been abolished. Wells are being drilled.

But that sense of increasing physical security remains precarious, and psychological security is something else. The LRA is a small force, with perhaps only 2,000 fighters holed up in Congo, but Mr Kony claims supernatural powers and his methods are barbaric: hacking open heads and limbs, slicing off ears and noses, gouging out eyes, padlocking vaginas, and abducting both adults and children. The violence is worth emphasising because it explains the almost demonic grip the LRA has over the displaced. A single LRA bullet, say aid workers, would be all it would take to send the resettled back to the camps.

The LRA has used the peace talks to depict itself as an army fighting for the rights of the north. It hopes for positions in Uganda's government (Mr Otti fancied being vice-president), much as Sudan's southern rebels won cabinet posts under that country's comprehensive peace agreement of 2005.

Northerners just want the force to disappear. Cosmos Akena, the head of Ober Abic village in the far west of Acholiland, trembles when asked about the LRA. He was abducted twice by the group, he says, but escaped. His village was abandoned and has only recently sprung back to life. There is not much to it; a few grass huts (some roofless), a primary school and a clinic. The children are barefoot, in tattered rags or naked, their bellies swollen with worms; traditional community life broke down in the centralised camps.

The LRA hideouts in Congo are a long way away from Ober Abic, but still the sense of exposure here is palpable. The village is at the end of a dirt track and the bush unfurls beyond in a pale sea of thorn and scrub, fading unbroken into Sudan and Congo. The school is closed; no teacher is brave enough to take the post. The World Food Programme (WFP) provides the village with 40% of its food, in monthly handouts. The rest is scraped out in cassava and banana from what should be a fertile land but is unforgiving; this year's harvest has failed. Still, the WFP reckons it can pull back in a couple of years if the LRA is disbanded.

That is a big if. Defections make the LRA less stable. Mr Kony may be selling the food aid he receives to rearm. Uganda's president, Yoweri Museveni, may also be dragging out negotiations in the hope of smashing Mr Kony militarily. Some think the Sudanese president, Omar al-Bashir, who has supported the LRA, wants to keep the fighters in play to destabilise south Sudan, if needed.

Then there is the question of justice. The International Criminal Court (ICC) is determined to try Mr Kony and his lieutenants for crimes against humanity. Some Acholi say they would be willing to judge him according to their local laws; anything for peace. They believe that the spirits of the dead will anyway drive the LRA commanders demented.

But this will not work. The LRA brutalised the entire north of Uganda, not just Acholiland, and young Acholi know little of, and care less about, traditional justice. Given the precedent it would set, the ICC can hardly back down now. Some think an unhappy compromise may be needed, with Mr Kony settled in a third country, while the ICC prepares a case against him until the end of his days ('Still gripped by fear' 2007, *The Economist*, 29 November http://www.economist.com/world/mideast-africa/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10214802 – Accessed 3 September 2008 – Attachment 1).

A report published in May 2008 by the Washington-based ENOUGH Project noted that, while there is a relatively low risk of renewed LRA attacks in northern Uganda, the North's immediate needs are "immense". According to the report:

Last October, the government of Uganda launched a three-year, \$600 million Peace, Reconstruction and Development Plan for the North, but due to funding, bureaucratic, and political obstacles, implementation has yet to begin. Getting development and reconstruction projects started is a critical step toward restoring the confidence of the people in the North and encouraging people to return home.

Immediate needs are immense. Take, for example, the district of Pader. An estimated 189,117 of those displaced – roughly half of the district’s population – have already moved to more than 130 transit sites as an intermediary step, and another 39,196 people have moved home. These people need clean water, education and health facilities, access to roads, food security, and employment, as well as support for the reconciliation and psychosocial programs. According to a United Nations humanitarian situation report in February, the current pupil-to-classroom ratio is 1-to-80, compared to the national average of 1-to-54. Classes in 63 schools take place under trees due to a lack of classroom facilities. Robust engagement by international donors, including the United States, could help to kick-start the government’s plan.

It is critical that the Ugandan government work to restore its relationship with those living in the North in order to tackle one of the root causes of this longstanding conflict. While the LRA is partially responsible for the displacement of nearly two million people in the North, the Ugandan government holds the majority of blame for herding people into camps, a move they undertook because of their inability to provide sufficient protection to them in their home villages. The government thus bears responsibility to help them return home. Development and reconstruction efforts must also be accompanied by the pursuit of accountability and promotion of reconciliation. Because no specific mechanism for dealing with Ugandan military atrocities is proposed out in the Final Peace Agreement, these crimes will need to be addressed by other means, whether through traditional truth-telling and/or transitional justice mechanisms, in order for peace to take hold. As stated by Uganda analyst Adam O’Brien, “If meaningful implementation does not begin soon, the PRDP will join the large graveyard of previous initiatives that aimed to help develop and reconstruct the North, and Acholi distrust of Museveni will be reinforced.”

...

While the LRA is unable to mount the number or style of attacks today that it launched in the past, small LRA remnants could still attack Ugandan civilians from across the Sudan border. Thus northern Ugandans have ample reasons to fear returning home and will need to see some measure of government protection in order to return to their home areas with confidence. As well, there is a need to protect returnees from a few small “sleeper cells” of LRA elements in the North and the few combatants that remain in areas not far from the border between southern Sudan and Uganda.

Ugandan security forces – both the army and the police – must deploy in ways that maximize the protection of potentially vulnerable areas in order to provide a deterrent to LRA attacks and a psychological comfort to returning Acholi civilians who have been traumatized by more than two decades of violence. Historically, the Ugandan military has not had clean hands either; as one Acholi leader told ENOUGH: “Our people have two enemies – the LRA and the Ugandan government – and no friends,” largely because of abuses committed by the government’s military in the North over the years. Overcoming this prevalent attitude is a huge barrier to lasting peace, and a failure to do so quickly could spawn yet another insurgency (Spiegel, J. and Prendergast, J. 2008, ‘A New Peace Strategy for Northern Uganda and the LRA’, *allAfrica.com*, source: ENOUGH Project, 8 May <http://allafrica.com/stories/200805081086.html> – Accessed 8 September 2008 – Attachment 2).

An article dated 14 August 2008 in *The Economist* noted that life in northern Uganda “has been returning to normal”, despite a lack of clear progress toward a peace deal with the LRA. According to the article:

At the end of June, citing the lack of progress towards a peace deal, the leaders of Uganda, Congo and the autonomous region of south Sudan agreed for the first time to co-ordinate military efforts to stamp out the rebellion once and for all.

But the prospect of a new offensive may well set the LRA on the war path again, pushing the rebels farther afield into a new redoubt in the Central African Republic (CAR), the region’s weakest link...

In February and March, the CAR had a taste of the LRA’s barbarism. As Mr Kony’s lieutenants were negotiating a peace deal that was later aborted, the rebels spent ten days raiding villages around Obo, near the CAR’s border with Sudan, looting homes and abducting some 150 people. “They said they were there for the girls and would come back,” says Jeanette, a 28-year-old who says she was kidnapped, gang-raped and then released by the rebels. “And when they did come back, if there was any resistance, they said it would be worse.”

But for all the fighting words of the leaders of Uganda and other governments in the area, it is doubtful whether they can effectively resume an all-out war against the LRA. The ceasefire that accompanied the talks with the rebels when they started nearly two years ago has more or less held in northern Uganda; life there has been returning to normal. Local Ugandans, mostly Acholis from whom the LRA is drawn, do not want to jeopardise that. Moreover, the south Sudanese, whose main trade route to Uganda’s capital, Kampala, and beyond passes through the affected area, oppose a renewal of war. And Congo, which would have to undertake the daunting task of driving the LRA out of its jungle hideouts in the country’s north-east, in such places as the Garamba National Park, has one of the least competent armies in the world.

The military hard men, especially in Uganda, say that only the threat of force will drag the LRA back to the negotiating table. They have been encouraged by the news that Mr Kony has at least named a new negotiating team. “As far as we’re concerned,” says Congo’s defence minister, Chikez Diemu, “I do think that when you want peace you prepare for war.” (‘Drums of war across the borders’ 2008, *The Economist*, 14 August http://www.economist.com/world/mideast-africa/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11921621 – Accessed 3 September 2008 – Attachment 3).

An article dated 19 August 2008, sourced from the *Angola Press Agency*, reports that despite moves towards a final peace agreement with the LRA in Uganda having been delayed, the United Nations special envoy involved in the process has noted that the process of resettlement in northern Uganda is irreversible “because no one thinks of resuming war or joining the LRA ranks”:

The United Nations special envoy for Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA)-affected areas, Joachim Chissano, has said LRA leader Joseph Kony is finally willing to sign a deal to end more than 20 years of conflict in northern Uganda, but only after meeting personally with the mediator of peace talks.

A Final Peace Agreement was to have been signed in April, but Kony failed to show up to the ceremony because of concerns about his indictment for war crimes issued by the International Criminal Court.

Chissano, who toured the LRA conflict-affected district of Gulu in northern Uganda, had earlier held a series of meetings with President Yoweri Museveni and other senior government officials in the capital, Kampala, as well as with representatives of UN agencies and aid organisations. In Gulu, Chissano held meetings with cultural and political leaders, survivors of the conflict, returnees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The envoy reiterated that during almost two years of talks in the Southern Sudanese capital, Juba, all issues had been resolved to both sides' satisfaction.

Asked if he was informed about a meeting that Kony had requested with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), Chissano said: "Well, if this meeting takes place, it will mean that the LRA will reconcile with the SPLA because, you know, a LRA unit recently attacked a SPLA unit that resulted in the death of SPLA soldiers and some Sudanese civilians and this means they needed to meet and reconcile. The fact that the meeting will take place means that now there is a good cooperation between the two sides."

On returns and resettlement, Chissano said: "It is a good thing that people are returning home because I think that this process is irreversible because no one thinks of resuming war or joining the LRA ranks." ('Chissano in Gulu to Salvage Lra-Govt Peace Deal' 2008, *allAfrica.com*, source: Angola Press Agency, 19 August <http://allafrica.com/stories/200808190587.html> – Accessed 2 September 2008 – Attachment 4).

In an article dated 19 August 2008, the *New Vision* reported on financial support for the reintegration in northern Uganda of persons formerly associated with the LRA. It was reported that:

The World Bank Group and the Government of Uganda have signed a \$2.85m Multi-Donor Trust Fund Grant to support the Amnesty Commission's demobilisation and reintegration of former rebels.

The new financing follows previous support from the Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (MDRP), which closed last year.

The new grant agreement signed by Uganda's Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Dr. Ezra Suruma, and the World Bank Uganda Country Manager, Kundhavi Kadiresan, will improve access to socio-economic reintegration support for about 24,000 ex-combatants and collaborators.

It will also support reconciliation and trust building activities between former rebels and their communities of return, to build a strong foundation for future peace and development in Uganda.

"This Multi-Donor Trust Fund provides both financial and technical resources to assist the Government in supporting the reintegration of the people that have reported for Amnesty in the past, as well as for planning and implementing the demobilisation and repatriation of the remaining caseloads of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)," explained Kees Kingma, the World Bank senior social development specialist.

At the request of Uganda, the World Bank in January established a special Multi-Donor Trust Fund to the demobilisation and reintegration of former rebel combatants and their collaborators in their return to civilian life ('World Bank Offers Over Sh3 Billion to Resettle Former ADF, LRA rebels' 2008, *allAfrica.com*, source: New Vision (Kampala), 19 August

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200808200150.html> – Accessed 2 September 2008 – Attachment 5).

2. The US DoS has reported that there were no reports of LRA attacks in 2007. Is this consistent with other country information?

An earlier RRT research response, prepared in November 2007, provides a summary of the activities of the LRA during 2007 and the information cited is consistent with the US Department of State's report of there having been no LRA attacks in Uganda in 2007 (RRT Research & Information 2007, *Research Response UGA32510*, 5 November – Attachment 6).

A search of other sources consulted found, amongst much information consistent with reports from the US Department of State, two articles which mention an LRA threat of attack in February 2007 and a subsequent attack in the north of Uganda for which the Ugandan military claimed the LRA was responsible.

On 6 February 2007, *Reuters* reported that LRA deputy commander Vincent Otti had said that the LRA was “ready to invade Uganda” if the venue for peace talks was not relocated away from south Sudan. According to the article:

Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army rebels will resume an offensive against the government unless Kampala agrees to move faltering peace talks to a new venue outside south Sudan, the LRA's deputy commander said on Tuesday.

“If they cannot find another venue, then I will go back to my country and start war,” LRA deputy commander Vincent Otti told Reuters by phone from his bush hideout on the Sudan-Democratic Republic of Congo border. “We are ready to invade Uganda.”

Otti declined to say when this would happen.

When asked whether the rebels would attack Ugandan army positions, he said: “Yes, we will.”

“[President Yoweri] Museveni is refusing this [relocation of the talks] purposefully so what else is left but to go back to war,” he said.

The Ugandan rebels, fighting for two decades, have said they would not return to talks in south Sudan's capital Juba after Sudan's president vowed to “get rid of the LRA from Sudan” (“Uganda rebels threaten war if no new talks venue found” 2007, *Reuters*, 6 February – Attachment 7).

An *IRINnews* article reported in May 2007 that the Ugandan army had claimed LRA responsibility for killings in an attack in the north of Uganda, although the LRA denied involvement in the incident. According to the report:

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) denied claims by the Ugandan military that it was responsible for killing seven people in an ambush in the north of the country on Monday evening.

The Ugandan army on Wednesday also charged that the insurgency was in violation of a truce agreement signed in 2006 to pave the way for peace talks under way in southern Sudan.

The LRA, however, denied responsibility for Monday's attack on the passengers travelling in three lorries from southern Sudan to Uganda.

"Three trucks heading from Sudan to Uganda were ambushed and the occupants abducted. They were moved about one-and-a-half kilometres from the scene as one of the eight victims escaped and the seven were undressed, the rebels tied their hands at their backs and used clubs to smash their heads and kill them," said army spokesman Lt Chris Magezi, quoting an account of the incident obtained from the survivor.

"This is a blatant violation of the [truce] agreement and it is an indication that they [the LRA] lack seriousness to pursue a peace deal with the government. The mediators and observers should investigate these incidents because they are of concern to us," said Magezi.

Justin Labeja, a member of the LRA delegation to the peace talks in Juba, the capital of southern Sudan, said the army's accusation was "unfair", telling IRIN by telephone from Juba: "It is always fashionable for the Ugandan military to blame any attack on the LRA."

The talks resumed on 27 April after four months of uncertainty that followed an LRA demand that Sudanese mediators be replaced and the venue of the talks moved. The United Nations special envoy to the talks, Joaquim Chissano, managed to convince the LRA to abandon its demands and go back to the negotiating table. The cessation of hostilities agreement initially signed in August 2006 has been extended until the end of June and the rebels have six weeks to assemble at Ri-Kwangba in southern Sudan during the talks ('LRA denies killings as peace talks resume' 2007, *IRINnews*, 2 May – Attachment 8).

3. Have there been any reports of LRA attacks in 2008? If so, where did they take place?

A search of the sources consulted found no reports of LRA attacks in Uganda in 2008, but sources do indicate that the LRA remains active in the region.

The previously mentioned report published in May 2008 by the Washington-based ENOUGH Project noted that the peace talks between the Ugandan government and the LRA "have certainly contributed to northern Uganda's current state of relative peace", but that during the past two years the leader of the LRA has "successfully morphed from as rebel/predator in northern Uganda into a genuine regional warlord, with small but deadly units marauding throughout eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, southern Sudan, and the Central African Republic". The report observed that:

What is needed now is a two-track strategy that will both enable northern Uganda to consolidate its relative peace, and will address the regional threat that Kony now poses... While Kony and the LRA remain a looming regional threat, a serious attack in the North in the short term is unlikely (Spiegel, J. and Prendergast, J. 2008, 'A New Peace Strategy for Northern Uganda and the LRA', *allAfrica.com*, source: ENOUGH Project, 8 May <http://allafrica.com/stories/200805081086.html> – Accessed 8 September 2008 – Attachment 2).

An article dated 25 August 2008, sourced from *New Vision*, reports attacks in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic attributed to the LRA. The article reports that:

The UN peacekeeping force in the DR Congo (MONUC) has accused the Lord's Resistance Army of attacking civilians in the eastern provinces of Ituri and Orientale.

Frank Mugabi reports that the force's spokesman, Michel Bonnardeaux, last week told journalists in Arua town that the previous week, the rebels robbed villages around Duru area.

The number of casualties was not clear due to the remoteness of the area but Bonnardeaux said following the attacks, MONUC and Congolese government soldiers had been jointly deployed in the provinces to protect civilians.

The rebels have also been accused of killing villagers in the neighbouring Central African Republic ('LRA Attacking Congolese Villages – UN' 2008, *allAfrica.com*, source: New Vision (Kampala), 25 August <http://allafrica.com/stories/200808260112.html> – Accessed 8 September 2008 – Attachment 9).

In an article dated 31 August 2008, it was reported in *The Nation* that northern Uganda is “enjoying relative calm”, notwithstanding ongoing delays in the peace process. According to the article:

The long-awaited signing of the final peace agreement between the Uganda Government and the Lord's Resistance Army will not be taking place in the foreseeable future.

This is the chilling message delivered in Nairobi last week by Mr David Matsanga, leader of the LRA peace delegation to the Juba peace talks.

After treating the international community to a circus of sorts, LRA leader Joseph Kony and his brigade have woken up – albeit a bit late in the day – to the reality of the International Criminal Court (ICC) warrants issued in 2005 against him and his commanders, two of whom have since died.

Whereas the warrants remained a sticking point during the negotiations that came to a close in June, it is unconscionable that the LRA is abandoning the agreement despite the efforts and resources that have been invested in the peace process.

The LRA peace delegation understood the implications of the warrants, and should not have wasted the international community's time.

For, unlike previous peace efforts characterised by threats and ultimatums from the Government, the Juba talks presented them with a chance of a lifetime, which has been squandered.

It does not help matters that their Kony continues to snub Dr Riek Machar, the chief mediator, and Mr Joaquim Chissano, the UN Special Envoy to the LRA-affected areas. Four times this year, he failed to honour appointments with the two mediators.

With the ghost of the ICC warrants returning to haunt the signing ceremony, the gains so far made in the talks will be painfully reversed, and northern Uganda – where the LRA holds sway – will bear the brunt.

It is noteworthy that for the first time in two decades, the region is enjoying relative calm. Some of the initial two million internally displaced persons have returned to their homes since

the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement last August, reducing the number to 1.6 million.

The number of “night commuters” has also gone down considerably. But with the imminent collapse of the peace talks, a return to war could be in the offing.

Though the Uganda Government has come up with the Peace Recovery and Development Programme (PRDP) for northern Uganda covering the period from 2006 to 2009, this may not be implemented without an immediate return of peace to the region (Ochieng, Z. 2008 ‘LRA Shot Itself in the Foot During Peace Negotiations’, *allAfrica.com*, source: The Nation (Nairobi), 31 August <http://allafrica.com/stories/200809011216.html> – Accessed 2 September 2008 – Attachment 10).

4. Does the LRA have a presence or engage in activity in Kampala in particular?
5. Does the LRA engage in activity in Jinja?

A search of the sources consulted found no reports of the LRA having a presence or engaging in activity in Kampala or Jinja.

6. To what extent do the authorities provide citizens with protection against attack by the LRA?

The US Department of State report on human rights practices for 2007 noted that security forces in Uganda were “constrained by limited resources, including low pay and lack of vehicles, equipment, and training” and that “impunity was a problem”. The report states as follows:

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The police force, under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, has the primary responsibility for law enforcement. The UPDF is the key armed force charged with external security but has had partial responsibility for maintaining order in the north, where it was deployed to protect civilian IDPs from rebel attacks. The Internal Security Organization (ISO) and External Security Organization, key security force agencies and intelligence-gathering entities under the direct authority of the president, occasionally detained civilians. The CMI, under UPDF authority, detained civilians suspected of rebel and terrorist activity. LDUs reinforced government efforts to protect civilians from LRA attacks. In some cases LDUs also participated in offensive military operations and carried out police functions.

Security forces continued to be constrained by limited resources, including low pay and lack of vehicles, equipment, and training. Security forces committed numerous abuses, and impunity was a problem. Police officials faced charges of bribery during the year; the police commissioner for human resources reported that three members of the police force were discharged or dismissed during the year for accepting bribes, a significant decrease from 2006 that may have been the result of an aggressive government campaign to encourage citizen reports of bribe-taking that led to 49 officers being relieved of duty in 2006. The Police Human Rights Desk investigated complaints of police abuses, including mismanagement of case papers; torture and harassment; unlawful arrest and detention; abuse of office; irregular or discreditable conduct; and corrupt practices. In conjunction with the UHRC and international organizations such as the ICRC and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UPDF and the police continued a training program to educate military officers on internationally recognized human rights standards. The police,

UPDF, and prisons service also used human rights manuals in their training programs (US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007 – Uganda*, March, Section 1(d) – Attachment 11).

A March 2008 report by the Overseas Security Advisory Council (self-described as “a Federal Advisory Committee with a U.S. Government Charter to promote security cooperation between American business and private sector interests worldwide and the U.S. Department of State”) similarly observes that:

The Ugandan Police lack adequate training and equipment and are underpaid. Most Police stations throughout the capital city have few phone lines, meager radio communications and a limited supply of vehicles, which are often in need of fuel. Police attempts to deter crime by placing their limited forces in static locations, supervised by mobile patrols that are infrequent have been unsuccessful. Police corruption is wide spread as evidenced by frequent request from Police officers for “donations” to cover the cost of completing a Police report or responding to a traffic accident. Police response to a crime often results in little more than a completed Police report. Investigations which result in the capture of a criminal are often lengthy and drawn out. The national emergency Police response number is “999.” Due to the limitations of the Police, many local businesses choose to augment their security by employing armed guards or watchmen. The quality of these services range from poor to adequate. Even the best security presents little deterrent to criminals with a propensity toward violence (‘Uganda 2008 Crime & Safety Report’ 2008, Overseas Security Advisory Council, 17 March – Attachment 12).

A news article dated 24 August 2008 indicates that the Ugandan police had sought additional funding to support their work in the north and the east. According to the report:

The Police have asked for sh21b from the Government to enable them sustain their work in the war-ravaged northern and eastern parts of the country.

According to the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Julius Odwe, without the funds, the force’s ongoing peace-keeping efforts and resettling of internally displaced persons would fail.

In July 2006, the Government instituted an 18-month humanitarian programme to increase the Police activities in the two regions after the Lord’s Resistance Army rebels left the area.

Delivering a report to Josephine Onya, the under-secretary in the internal affairs ministry, on Friday at the Police headquarters in Kampala, Odwe said the sh26.9b the Force got from the Government and Netherlands to facilitate the programme was exhausted early this year.

...

He further explained that the efforts were geared towards establishing law and order in the two regions, which have suffered from lawlessness in the 20-year war.

...

According to Odwe’s report, most of the internally displaced persons have returned to their homes. In Dokolo district, 100% returned by September last year, while in Lira, Apac, Oyam, and Kaberamaido districts, 100% returned by January this year. In Soroti district, 93% have returned, 82% in Amuria, 65% in Katakwi, 52% in Pader, 59% in Kitgum, 43% in Gulu while in Amuru 43% of the displaced people had returned by June 2008.

Onya commended the Police for executing their duty and the governments of Netherlands and Britain for supporting peace recovery in the region.

“The work you have done will encourage the people of the north to have confidence in the Police force and the NRM government, she observed (Kagola, F. 2008, ‘Sh21 Billion Needed for Peace Keeping Efforts’, *allAfrica.com*, Source: New Vision (Kampala), 24 August <http://allafrica.com/stories/200808251108.html> – Accessed 2 September 2008 – Attachment 13).

7. Please provide information on the recruitment methods used by the LRA.

Sources indicate that recruitment by the LRA has taken the form of abduction and forced conscription, including the abduction and conscription of children.

A Human Rights Watch report published in March 2003 includes information about the LRA’s methods of abducting and retaining those abducted. The report notes that:

Children are abducted in record numbers by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda and subjected to brutal treatment as soldiers, laborers, and sexual slaves. Since June of 2002, an estimated 5,000 children have been abducted from their homes and communities – a larger number than any previous year of the sixteen-year-old conflict and a dramatic increase from the less than 100 children abducted in 2001.

Children have been targets of LRA abductions throughout the conflict between the LRA and the Ugandan government in the northern part of Uganda, which began in 1986. Conservative estimates place the total number of children abducted at more than 20,000. The rate of abductions has escalated dramatically since early 2002, when a military offensive launched by the Uganda People’s Defense Force (UPDF) resulted in the LRA returning to Uganda from their camps in southern Sudan.

Children are abducted from their homes, schools, and off the streets. They are frequently beaten, and forced to carry out raids, burn houses, beat and kill civilians, and abduct other children. They must carry heavy loads over long distances, and work long hours fetching water, firewood, gathering food and performing domestic duties. Many are given weapons training and some are forced to fight against the UPDF.

The LRA uses brutal tactics to demand obedience from abducted children. Children are forced to beat or trample to death other abducted children who attempt to escape, and are repeatedly told they will be killed if they try to run away. Children who fall behind during long marches or resist orders are also killed. Many others have been killed in battle or have died from mistreatment, disease and hunger.

Girls are used as domestic servants for commanders and their households. At age fourteen or fifteen, many are forced into sexual slavery as “wives” of LRA commanders and subjected to rape, unwanted pregnancies, and the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

The threat of abduction has made children throughout the region fear for their safety. Each night, thousands of children pour into Gulu town and Lacor hospital from surrounding areas, hoping to avoid abduction. They seek refuge on verandas, in the bus park, on church grounds and in local factories before returning home again each morning (Human Rights Watch 2003, ‘Stolen Children: Abduction and Recruitment in Northern Uganda’, March, p.2 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/uganda0303/> – Accessed 8 September 2008 – Attachment 14).

A report on the LRA and forced conscription published in June 2007 noted that, from as early as 1991, the LRA “started to employ abduction as a systematic tactic to recruit fighters, instill

fear, and punish civilians seen as collaborating with the government”. The report includes data from a number of reception centres for former LRA abductees who had escaped from the LRA or been captured by the Ugandan army, and summarised data collected by the CARITAS reception centre in Apac as follows:

Caritas Apac’s database consisted of 192 children who arrived at the center between June 2003 and July 2005... The information contained in the database is summarized below.

Almost 60 percent of the abductees received at Caritas were male, and 71 percent (137) were originally from Apac. The majority of the others were from Gulu (9%) and Lira (14%). The earliest abduction recorded at Apac took place in October 1996 and the most recent case recorded was abducted October 10, 2005. The recorded dates of escape from captivity ranged between December 2000 and October 2005. Returnees stayed at the reception center as little as two days but some stayed for up to a year.

Caritas asked returnees about their experiences when they were initially abducted and their exposure to traumatic experiences during their time in captivity. At the time of abduction, almost 80 percent were forced to carry a load, 67 percent were beaten, and 58 percent were tied up. About one-third (31%) were with their family at the time of the abduction, 21 percent were abducted with brothers, and 11 percent were abducted with sisters. More than half (52%) of the abductions occurred during the night, 21 percent occurred during the evening, 19 percent occurred during the day, and 8 percent in the morning. In addition, four out of five returnees (80%) were enrolled in school prior to abduction: 72 percent were enrolled in primary school, 6 percent were in secondary school, and 2 percent were in tertiary school. This is consistent with school enrollment rates found in the camps. While in captivity, most witnessed or participated in violence (some were forced to perpetrate violence, while others were on the receiving end). Almost two-thirds (65%) were beaten or tortured, 15 percent participated in killing, 31 percent witnessed another captive participate in killing, and 49 percent witnessed the killing of another captive. Returnees identified failing to walk or walking too slowly and attempted escape as the two main reasons captives were killed, beaten, and/or tortured by LRA. Among the 78 females, 14 percent were given to commanders and 10 percent gave birth while in captivity (Pham, P., Vinck, P., & Stover, E. 2007, ‘Abducted: The Lord’s Resistance Army and Forced Conscriptation in Northern Uganda’, Human Rights Center University of California, Berkeley website, June, pp.13, 28-29 <http://hrc.berkeley.edu/pdfs/NUgandaReport2007.pdf> – Accessed 4 September 2008 – Attachment 15).

A former abductee’s account of her treatment by the LRA is given in an article from August 2007, sourced from *IRIN*:

Monica Atto, 24, was abducted by the rebel Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) as a child but escaped and now lives with her children in a rehabilitation centre in Gulu, northern Uganda. Her diary begins on July 10...

These days with the peace talks things have changed. There is no more captivity. There is no more abduction. People are at rest and we aren’t having so many funerals. But the peace talks have kept many of the children in the bush and we don’t hear about them coming back any more. Now they are all up in [Democratic Republic of] Congo, people are not escaping any longer.

There is no one particularly I would like to see but I feel for them all having that hard life up there. I was there for 10 years myself but my life is much better now I’m back. I live with my four children at the Child Protection Unit here in Gulu, along with some other returnees, and I can go and sell vegetables down at the market, do what I need to get by.

Before I went to the bush I was living in Palabek, a camp in Kitgum district, with my mother and brothers and sisters. I was 13 when I was taken. By that time I was really the mother of the family. My mother had fallen ill with a disease that cracked her hands and legs. She couldn't walk and had to crawl so I became the mother when I was eight years old. That's the way it was.

The LRA had collaborators and one was a neighbour. He led them to where the children were and so one night they came for us. They came at 10 in the evening when we were asleep. By the time I woke up they were already inside and one guy took off his bag and handed it to me to carry. My mother was shouting, pleading, saying she wasn't well and needed me but they wouldn't listen. They took a stick and started caning her. I said to her, let me go and as long as there is still life we will meet again. And if they kill me the young ones will grow up and support you. I was worried that they would kill her if she protested any longer.

After I escaped in 2004 I went back and found that everyone had been killed by the rebels. My father had good land up there and if peace comes I could perhaps go back, lots of people are, but who'd take care of me up there? If I was living there it would just be a constant reminder of all the people I've lost. I'd be so empty, so lonely. My brother is still with the rebels and if he was released and came back things could be different. Perhaps we'd both go back together.

Things were difficult when I went back. Because I was a returnee my uncle expected that I'd had lots of help from NGOs and was wanting things from me but I didn't have anything to give. With four children to look after, what would I have to take?

But these days I have too much fear that it would be too lonely. So I'll stay here in Gulu, this is where my life is now ('Monica Atto, 24, former LRA abductee and soldier' 2007, *IRIN*, 30 August – Attachment 16).

The US Department of State's report on human rights practices in Uganda noted no reports of abduction or other conscription of children by the LRA during 2007:

The LRA regularly abducted and conscripted thousands of children in previous years; however, there were no reports of such activity during the year, and there were no further reports of UPDF interrogations of former LRA child soldiers. Children abducted by the LRA in previous years were used as laborers, soldiers, guards, and sex slaves. In addition to being beaten, raped, and forced to march until exhausted, abducted children were forced to participate in the killing of other children. Most LRA rebels were children between the ages of 11 and 16 (US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007 – Uganda*, March, Section 1(g) – Attachment 11).

An article from June 2008 indicates that LRA is, however, still recruiting in neighbouring countries:

Although the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) does not seem to be recruiting children in Uganda, women and children are still present in its ranks, and the rebel group is allegedly enlisting young people from neighbouring countries, according to a United Nations report released today.

The LRA, which has fought a civil war with the Ugandan Government since the mid-1980s, became notorious during the conflict for abducting as many as 25,000 children and using them as fighters and porters. The children were often subject to extreme violence shortly after abduction, with many girls allocated to officers in a form of institutional rape.

“Owing to the apparent absence of LRA from Ugandan territory, there have been no recent cases of recruitment and use of Ugandan children, or other grave violations against children attributable to LRA,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon writes in a new report to the Security Council.

“However, children and women are still present in the LRA ranks, and there has been no movement on their release,” he adds.

In addition, he notes there are reports alleging that the group has been recruiting children from southern Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR).

In one case, three boys from the Sudan and the CAR who escaped from the LRA reported that they had been forced to work for the group as porters. They also reported that girls were present in the ranks, and that they were regularly subjected to gender-based violence, including rape.

On 23 April, authorities in Dungu in eastern DRC reported that 13 people, including four students, were abducted from a primary school following LRA attacks.

“These allegations are being reported while the peace talks between LRA and the Government of Uganda are stalled, notably because of the refusal by the LRA leader, Joseph Kony, to sign the final peace agreement,” Mr. Ban writes.

Last July the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict called on the LRA to unconditionally release children used in their ranks, and underlined the absence of any concrete signs in this regard.

The Group also noted the International Criminal Court indictments against five senior members of the LRA – the leader Joseph Kony, and the commanders Vincent Otti, Okot Odhiambo, Dominic Ongwen and Raska Lukwiya – on a number of charges, including the enlistment of children through abduction.

The rebel group has maintained that it had released all children and women abducted or forcibly conscripted some time ago and that those who remained in the bush were women and children related to LRA members.

Mr. Ban says that this information cannot be independently verified because of the absence of any direct contacts between the UN and the LRA leadership (‘Ugandan rebel group allegedly still recruiting children’ 2008, *United Nations News Service*, 25 June – Attachment 17).

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IRINnews.org website <http://www.irinnews.org>

Topic Specific Links

Child Rights Information Network website <http://www.crin.org/>

Institute for War and Peace Reporting website <http://www.iwpr.net>

Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website <http://www.internal-displacement.org/>

International Criminal Court website <http://www.icc-cpi.int>

Uganda Christian Churches website <http://www.ugandachurches.org/>

Search Engines

Copernic search engine

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

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