



MEDIA RELEASE - For Immediate Release 14 December 2010

Eminent personalities declare that risk of Christmas LRA Massacres exists, and demand UN action.

The UN Security Council and UN member states must prioritize immediately halting and averting the threat posed by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), according to former high-ranking diplomats and UN officials.

Romeo Dallaire, Jan Egeland Juan Mendez, and Gareth Evans, warn that in light of ongoing attacks and past precedence there is an imminent threat of massacres of civilians, rapes and abductions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The call comes on the one year anniversary of a massacre in which 300 people were slaughtered over the course of four days by the LRA in Haute Uele province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The prior year, beginning on Christmas day 2008, 620 civilians were massacred over two days in this same region. The experts warn that there is a real threat of repeat attacks this year.

“The LRA is a regional menace that survives and thrives by terrorizing vulnerable populations including by using young children to kill, and as sex slaves. How many lives must be lost and destroyed before the international community agrees to take the threat seriously and act?” Romeo Dallaire, former Force Commander of the UN Mission to Rwanda.

“How is it possible that the international community has still not improved its ability to protect populations from the LRA's reign of terror? Unless UN member states, and notably Security Council members develop and implement a regional strategy to prevent and protect and take decisive action to halt LRA atrocities, they risk adding this to a shameful list of failures” Jan Egeland, former UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

In 2005 world leaders committed to uphold the responsibility to protect populations from mass atrocities — such as the crimes against humanity perpetrated by the LRA in Sudan, DRC and the Central African Republic. These states bear the primary responsibility to protect their populations from the LRA, however significant international assistance and coordination between regional governments and the UN is needed to halt the threat as their efforts so far have proved unsuccessful and in some cases have led to retaliatory attacks against civilians.

“It is high time that the Security Council puts this issue on its agenda and takes sincere steps to fulfill the responsibility to protect,” Gareth Evans, former Australian Foreign Minister and President Emeritus, International Crisis Group, “There is no excuse for delay and inaction - decisive steps must be taken immediately to save lives today.”

The eminent personalities called on UN member states to:

- Collect better information about LRA movements and composition and develop a mechanism for information sharing amongst regional governments and peacekeeping missions
- Translate this information into preventive deployments of peacekeepers in areas at risk of LRA attacks, combined with more effective communication networks between peacekeeping forces and vulnerable villages.
- Strengthen programs to encourage the desertion of soldiers from the LRA and to assist such soldiers, many of whom are victims of LRA abductions, in leaving the group and reintegrating into their communities
- Undertake serious, coordinated military efforts to apprehend LRA leaders and to end the threat posed by the LRA. Any such efforts must be designed in such a way as to mitigate the risk of civilian casualties including by protecting civilians from potential retaliatory attacks by LRA fighters.

ENDS.

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Roméo Dallaire, is the former Force Commander of the UN Mission to Rwanda, Canadian Senator, and patron of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect"

Jan Egeland, Director, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, former UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and member of the International Advisory Board, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect

Juan Méndez, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, former UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, and member of the International Advisory Board, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect

Gareth Evans, Co-Chair, International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, President Emeritus, International Crisis Group, former Australian Foreign Minister, and co-chair of the International Advisory Board of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect was created in February 2007 to catalyze action to move the 2005 World Summit agreement on the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity from principle into practice. See website: www.globalr2p.org/ ###