



[for immediate release]

Investigating alleged LRA activity in Sudan critical to new UN LRA strategy

Sudanese government attempts to block UN investigation of LRA activity in South Darfur, threatens implementation of new UN LRA strategy

NEW YORK 26 July 2012 –Joseph Kony and combatants from the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) may be active in Sudan’s South Darfur region, which could impede a new regional strategy to stop LRA violence approved by the United Nations (UN) Security Council, a coalition of NGOs said today. The groups called upon the Council to ensure the hybrid UN and African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) has the mandate to thoroughly investigate these allegations, despite objections by the Sudanese government.

“Tasking UNAMID with investigating alleged LRA activity in Darfur would send a clear message that the UN is truly committed to implementing its new LRA strategy,” said Michael Poffenberger, Executive Director of Resolve. “The Council should not be intimidated by Sudan’s objections, which ignore the persistent reports of an LRA presence in South Darfur and raise questions about Sudan’s commitment to resolving the crisis.”

Speaking to the press on July 24, Sudan’s ambassador to the UN denied any LRA presence in Sudan and warned the Council against tasking UNAMID with investigating LRA activity, saying, "Including this issue is going to be an impediment and cause of refusal, which may affect our cooperation with UNAMID and its actions in Darfur. If we truly wish to establish peace, stability, and security then let us discard this issue far away from Darfur and UNAMID." Reports indicate that China and Russia are using their position on the Council to block language tasking UNAMID with investigating LRA activity.

Sudan has a long history of providing support to the LRA, and as recently as 2010 the UN Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo (Congo) documented a meeting between LRA forces and Sudanese military representatives in South Darfur. In April 2012, Ugandan government officials claimed that LRA forces were operating in South Darfur and receiving support from the Sudanese government. A woman who escaped from the LRA that month also alleged that Kony was in South Darfur.

In a joint letter addressed to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and African Union Commission Chairperson Jean Ping, the NGOs also highlighted better investigation of LRA activity as a critical step in improving cross-border cooperation between governments affected by the LRA. Senior Congolese officials have downplayed the extent of LRA attacks on civilians, and forced Ugandan troops pursuing the rebel group to withdraw from Congolese territory in September 2011.

“Apprehending Kony and his top deputies will be impossible without a real commitment by the governments of LRA-affected areas and greater collaboration between them, “ said John Bradshaw, Executive Director of the Enough Project. “The UN and AU should convene a side meeting at the UN General Assembly in September to address the primary obstacles of inadequate troops and the inability of the Ugandan army – the only army conducting offensive operations against the LRA – to access LRA safe havens. President Obama should personally attend the meeting.”

The letter also calls upon regional governments to do more to protect civilians from LRA attacks. National military forces deployed in LRA-affected areas of Congo, Central African Republic (CAR), and South Sudan are often too poorly equipped and paid to protect civilians effectively. Mobile phone networks and road systems critical for rapid responses to LRA attacks on remote communities are also lacking across the region.

"Protecting civilians from mass atrocities committed by the LRA should be a priority for every government in the region" said Dr. Simon Adams of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. "There can not be peace and security in Darfur or anywhere else in Central Africa while the LRA still have a license to kill."

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