



United Nations actions to address the threat and impact of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

WHO IS INVOLVED?

The United Nations has intensified its efforts to help address the threat and the impact of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The UN is contributing on multiple fronts, through political, peacekeeping, human rights, humanitarian and development activities. Its efforts are carried out in support of the African Union (AU) and the governments and people of the four affected countries – the Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Sudan and Uganda, in collaboration with other partners.

The United Nations entities involved include: the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA), UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), UN Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), UN Office to the African Union (UNOAU), UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Bank.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The United Nations is particularly engaged in a number of key areas:

Promoting regional commitment and cooperation: The LRA is a regional problem whose resolution requires regional cooperation. At the request of the Security Council, UNOCA, a political mission with a regional mandate, is working with the AU, the four affected countries, UN partners and others to maximize the collective impact of actions to address the problems caused by the LRA. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA, Mr. Abou Moussa, and the AU Special Envoy on the LRA, Mr. Francisco Madeira are working together to help ensure sustained political commitment by the governments of the four affected countries and the necessary support of their partners. In addition, UNOCA, in close consultation with UNOAU, the UN entities in the LRA-affected region and the AU, is developing of a regional strategy to counter the LRA, address the impact of its activities and to promote joint, coordinated action

Military efforts to counter the LRA threat and protect civilians: The UN, through its peacekeeping missions in the DRC and South Sudan (MONUSCO and UNMISS), have focused on protecting civilians. In the DRC, this includes providing military escorts to people going to markets and farmers to their fields, and patrolling in and around villages and towns where an LRA presence is reported. The UN is also working with partners to strengthen the radio and cellphone early warning networks in the affected areas. MONUSCO also provides logistical support to the efforts of the Congolese army to mount military actions against the LRA in the DRC.

In addition, UNOAU provides strategic and operational planning support while other UN peace operations in the affected areas are currently providing some logistical support to the AU-led Regional Cooperation Initiative against the LRA (RCI-LRA). The Initiative includes the deployment of a Regional Task Force (RTF) comprising 5,000 troops from the four affected countries to track and capture the LRA leader Joseph Kony as well as other leaders and

combatants. The RTF was formally launched on 24 March in Juba and is expected to begin operations shortly. However, the AU-led RCI-LRA remains under-resourced to fulfil its mandate. The Mission has been authorised by the AU and the four countries are expected to cover the costs of the deployment of their respective troops. The UN encourages the partners of the four countries to provide the much-needed financial and technical support to those countries and to the AU to ensure the success of the Initiative.

MONUSCO has established a Joint Information and Operations Cell (JIOC) in Dungu, Haut-Uélé, to monitor and analyse information regarding LRA attacks and coordinate operations. It also serves as the hub for communicating operational information regarding LRA activities with UN missions in CAR and South Sudan and with the national militaries from the affected countries.

Promoting Disarmament, Demobilisation, Repatriation, Resettlement and Reintegration (DDRRR) of former LRA combatants: MONUSCO, UNMISS and BINUCA, are working with local communities and civil society groups to encourage defections of combatants and disarm them, facilitate their repatriation, and provide them with reinsertion assistance in their home communities. This work includes a cross-border communication campaign encouraging combatants to defect and disarm through radio programmes broadcast and leaflets dropped across the areas where there is an LRA presence. As part of these efforts, MONUSCO has repatriated over 120 escaped or surrendered LRA combatants to the CAR, South Sudan and Uganda to resume civilian life. Once they have been disarmed and demobilised, UNDP and other long-term development partners also work to integrate former combatants into their communities through providing vocational training and employment opportunities while also supporting communities to absorb them by implementing sensitisation campaigns and community-level reconciliation initiatives.

Humanitarian assistance: Indiscriminate attacks by the LRA against civilians have caused a serious humanitarian crisis in the CAR, DRC and South Sudan. More than 465,000 people are currently displaced or living as refugees as a result of LRA activities. The vast majority of the displaced (347,000) are in Orientale province in DRC. Following a lull in late 2011, a resurgence of LRA attacks is causing new displacements in the DRC and CAR. UN agencies and NGOs are providing humanitarian assistance to people in CAR, DRC and South Sudan. The remote and insecure nature of the LRA-affected areas in these countries makes it extremely difficult and costly to establish and maintain humanitarian access. Nevertheless, humanitarian protection and assistance have been increased in 2011. This assistance needs to be extended further, in particular in CAR and DRC, and should be complemented by more long-term development assistance. When people are separated from their farmland the international community has to meet the food needs of the entire family for a full year at least. The World Food Programme (WFP) has been bringing life-saving food to refugees and vulnerable groups. Emergency school meal programmes and food-for-work programmes are becoming increasingly important. MONUSCO peacekeepers play a key role in facilitating the delivery of assistance, including by providing escorts for humanitarian partners.

Child protection: United Nations child protection actors, including UNICEF and Child Protection advisers in MONUSCO, BINUCA and UNMISS, have assisted hundreds of children who escaped from the LRA or were captured in military operations against the LRA. They work with non-governmental actors to repatriate these children, reunify them with their families and provide support them with reintegration and rehabilitation programs, including holistic assistance, skill training and education. Through a regional child protection focal point system, United Nations actors are monitoring, reporting in a coordinated manner on grave violations committed against children by the LRA. Bi-monthly and annual reports are submitted to the Security Council Working Group on children and armed conflict through the Office of the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict, and used by actors to advocate for the protection of LRA-affected children and respond to their needs.

Seeking Justice for LRA leaders: In 2005, the International Criminal Court unsealed arrest warrants for five LRA commanders on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Of the indicted commanders, the group's leader Joseph Kony, as well as Okot Odhiambo and Dominic Ongwen are believed to be still alive. The United Nations stands ready to support efforts to arrest and bring to justice LRA leaders for alleged grave human rights violations.

Peacebuilding and development support: The United Nations is assisting communities to address the immediate and longer-term impact of LRA attacks on people's lives and livelihoods. MONUSCO engineering units are rehabilitating a number of main roads connecting important population centers in the DRC, which has significantly improved access and facilitated trade in the LRA-affected sub-region. International partners including the UN are also implementing projects and programmes aimed at extending State authority in support of the Government of the DRC's stabilization plan for eastern DRC. UNDP is working in the three countries to help address the root causes of poverty and underdevelopment, and create the conditions conducive to long-term economic recovery. This includes through programmes related to governance and state presence expansion, peacebuilding through community rehabilitation and livelihoods projects, and poverty reduction initiatives aimed at attaining progress on the Millennium Development Goals.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN NEXT?

The recent increase in international attention to the LRA can help to build momentum at a critical time. Although current estimates suggest that the LRA comprises less than 500 combatants operating under the leadership of Joseph Kony, it can still attack, terrorise and harm local communities and cause large-scale displacement.

The United Nations is developing a regional strategy to address the LRA threat, in partnership with the African Union, governments in the affected countries and the support of multilateral and bilateral partners.

With all these parties on board there is a real chance of finding a solution and ending the extensive fear and human suffering caused by the LRA for a quarter of a century. This is urgently required to stop the violence and allow the 465,000 displaced persons and their host communities to re-establish livelihoods and regain hope.

The leaders of the affected countries, the AU and international partners need to prioritize this effort and commit the resources required to end the LRA threat and ensure better protection and humanitarian assistance for civilians living in LRA-affected areas.

WHAT IS THE VIEW OF THE UNITED NATIONS ON THE RECENT RENEWED ATTENTION TO THE LRA?

The United Nations welcomes the renewed attention on the LRA issue. The governments of the affected countries are at a critical point in efforts to end a conflict that has been underway since the 1980s. The affected countries, their bilateral partners, regional and sub-regional organizations and the wider international community are committed to finally resolving the LRA issue. It is important to take advantage of this unprecedented interest and political commitment to restore security and stability so that the people in the affected areas can benefit from the dividends of peace and socio-economic development that they so deeply deserve.

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