



## ***Members of Congress Should Cosponsor Landmark Legislation Aiming to Protect Civilians from Brutal Violence in Central Africa***

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For over twenty years the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has terrorized communities in central Africa, attacking civilians and abducting tens of thousands of children in four countries. Members of Congress should immediately **commit to co-sponsoring the bipartisan *LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act (S.1067, H.R. 2478)***, which was introduced in May 2009. The Act will help stop the immediate violence and end one of Africa's longest-running conflicts by:

1. *Stopping LRA violence*, by mandating President Obama to devise an interagency strategy to prevent LRA attacks, which should include a multilateral plan to apprehend top LRA leaders, encourage defections of rebel commanders, demobilize child soldiers, and protect civilians from rebel attacks; and
2. *Investing in sustainable peace*, by targeting US assistance to recovery and reconciliation efforts in northern Uganda, which are essential to rebuilding and healing war-affected communities and preventing future conflicts.

Read below for details on how this landmark legislation will achieve progress towards these goals.

### **1. Stopping the LRA: Apprehending top LRA commanders key to ending one of Africa's longest-running conflicts**

On December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008, LRA forces massacred over 200 Congolese civilians, deliberately targeting families gathered to celebrate the Christmas holiday. These attacks are consistent with a pattern of LRA violence that has plagued central Africa for over twenty years, fueled by the rebel group's abduction of nearly 30,000 children who have been forced to become soldiers, laborers and sexual slaves. Since September 2008, the LRA has killed over 1,200 people and abducted over 600 children, and is now destabilizing eastern DR Congo, southern Sudan and the Central African Republic.

Stopping LRA attacks requires a comprehensive, multilateral approach that includes improved protection of civilians and efforts to encourage defections of LRA commanders, as well as lower-level members. However, permanently preventing LRA violence hinges on successful efforts to apprehend LRA leader Joseph Kony, should he continue to refuse a peace agreement to end the conflict. Kony has transformed from a local rebel leader in northern Uganda into a regional warlord, and many experts fear he is trying to renew an alliance with the Sudanese government in Khartoum, severed since 2005. He is the linchpin to the LRA's survival and the biggest obstacle to ending the violence, having recently rejected a peace agreement with the Ugandan government and instead opted to continue his campaign of violence against civilians.

The US is uniquely positioned to help stop LRA atrocities, especially by leading efforts to secure the critical first step in ending the insurgency – apprehending Joseph Kony and other top LRA commanders. However, previous efforts to apprehend Kony, including a failed US-supported regional military operation against the LRA last year, have lacked sufficient engagement and investment from US leaders. With more robust diplomatic leadership, the US can spearhead the development of a multilateral strategy to apprehend Kony that has a strong possibility of success and that includes measures to adequately protect civilians and abducted children from harm.

*To this end, the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act:*

- Mandates President Obama to devise an interagency strategy to prevent further LRA violence, which should include a multilateral plan to apprehend top LRA leaders, encourage defections of rebel commanders, demobilize child soldiers, and protect civilians from rebel attacks; and
- Authorizes \$10 million in emergency support for communities in the DR Congo, South Sudan and Central African Republic most affected by recent LRA attacks.

## **2. Investing in sustainable peace: A window of opportunity for northern Uganda**

Apprehending rebel leaders and demobilizing child soldiers can end the immediate LRA violence, but the keys to sustainable peace in northern Uganda, where the conflict originated, lie in recovery and reconciliation for war-affected communities. Failure to reverse the consequences of two decades of war and forced displacement threatens to deepen long-standing divisions between the North and South of Uganda and between northerners and the central government. However, lack of political will among senior Ugandan officials and insufficient engagement by the international community have prevented genuine implementation of key economic recovery programs and transitional justice initiatives. Despite experiencing over two years free of LRA violence, northern Uganda has yet to benefit from a significant peace dividend.

The US has a fleeting window of opportunity to help jumpstart recovery and reconciliation processes for war-affected communities. Targeted increases in funding, especially for transitional justice initiatives, can help heal divisions left by decades of conflict and overcome Uganda's legacy of divisive politics that gave rise to the LRA and threatens to spark future violence if unaddressed. Equally important, improved US engagement with the Ugandan government can ensure funds dedicated to recovery efforts are implemented transparently and through sustainable partnerships with local government and civil society.

*To this end, the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act:*

- Authorizes \$10 million for each of the next three years to support underfunded reconciliation and transitional justice initiatives in Uganda;
- Recommends Congress increase funding for reconstruction assistance to northern Uganda in future fiscal years, provided that the Ugandan government takes steps to effectively implement economic recovery plans; and
- Requires the Obama Administration to report on the effectiveness of US assistance to northern Uganda and work with international partners and the Ugandan government to strengthen accountability mechanisms to ensure the transparent and timely use of funds.

### **Original Congressional co-sponsors**

Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI)  
Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS)  
Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA)  
Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA)  
Rep. Brad Miller (D-NC)

### ***For more information on the conflict or how to support this legislation***

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