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## Human Rights and the War on Terror: A Survey of Terrorism and Human Rights in Uganda

### Abstract

Tragically, Uganda is a primary example of a country dominated by terror and human rights violations. In a 2006 interview with Integrated Regional Information Networks IRIN, the news department of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland, called the conflict in Uganda “the worst form of terrorism in the world.” Defining terrorism as indiscriminate violence against civilians, he declares that nowhere in the world is there a more concentrated area where so many people are being terrorized, and have been for such a long period of time. According to UNOCHA, the conflict in northern Uganda has forced some 1.7 million people—close to 90 percent of the region’s population—to leave their homes for the relative safety of about 200 camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) scattered around the region.

### Keywords

Human rights, Terrorism, Uganda, United Nations

## **A Survey of Terrorism and Human Rights in Uganda**

By Arika Long

Tragically, Uganda is a primary example of a country dominated by terror and human rights violations. In a 2006 interview with Integrated Regional Information Networks IRIN, the news department of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland, called the conflict in Uganda “the worst form of terrorism in the world.” Defining terrorism as indiscriminate violence against civilians, he declares that nowhere in the world is there a more concentrated area where so many people are being terrorized, and have been for such a long period of time. According to UNOCHA, the conflict in northern Uganda has forced some 1.7 million people—close to 90 percent of the region’s population—to leave their homes for the relative safety of about 200 camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) scattered around the region.

### **Background to the Conflict**

Uganda gained independence from Great Britain on October 9, 1962, after almost 70 years of colonial rule. Several decades of political unrest and widespread violence followed, notably under President Milton Obote in the 1960s and again in the 1980s. Amnesty International estimated that in 1985, Obote’s administration was responsible for over 300,000 civilian deaths. In 1971, Idi Amin ousted Obote in a military coup, ushering in one of the most brutal chapters in Uganda’s history. Amin viciously quashed all opposition to his regime, often beheading suspected insurgents. He killed as many as 300,000 civilians during his eight years as president. In 1972, he expelled Uganda’s entire Asian population, giving them three days to leave the country—a move that wreaked havoc on the country’s economy. In 1978, Amin attempted to invade Tanzania to claim its Kagera region for Uganda. Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere retaliated, and, with the help of exiled Ugandan opposition members, deposed Amin, who fled to Saudi Arabia where he died in 2003. In 1981, current President Yoweri Museveni launched a five-year guerrilla war against then-leader Okello Lutwa. He succeeded and was first elected democratically in 1996 following the formation of a new constitution; he was re-elected in 2001 and (to a controversial third term) in 2006.

### **The Lord’s Resistance Army**

Since 1987, northern Uganda has been the scene of violent conflict between the rebel Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and government troops. The LRA’s leader, self-proclaimed mystic Joseph Kony, claims to be fighting to replace Museveni’s government with one based on the Bible’s Ten Commandments. In 1994, the LRA extended its war to the civilian population in northern and eastern Uganda, terrorizing the people and decimating humanitarian conditions in the affected areas. The LRA insurgency also extends into north-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), as well as Sudan, where it has established headquarters, bases, and support from the Sudanese government.

It is important to note that the LRA war against the Ugandan government can be seen as a proxy war by the government of Sudan to perpetuate insecurity in northern Uganda; the government of Uganda can also be observed as reciprocating by supporting the Sudan People's Liberation Army war against the government of Sudan. The LRA is known for its brutality, routinely maiming and killing civilians, and abducting children for use as child soldiers, sex slaves and domestic workers.

### **Peace Process**

In 2006, the government of Southern Sudan began mediating peace talks in Juba between the government of Uganda and the LRA. Four previous attempts at negotiation were unsuccessful, most likely because they were held in Uganda. Between July 2006 and January 2007, the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CHA) was signed and violated, both parties walked out of the negotiations, two addenda were signed, civilians were killed in LRA-style ambushes in southern Sudan—later suspected to have been committed by others—the discussions reached a stalemate over the mediator and venue of the peace talks. The LRA, in particular, is highly suspicious of hidden agendas in the talks.

### **Terrorism**

In 2002, Uganda passed anti-terrorism legislation to protect the country's national security and to ensure that Uganda meets its international obligations with respect to counter-terrorism. After September 11, 2001, President Museveni's government designated the LRA as a terrorist organization in response to the organization's designation on the U.S. Terrorist Exclusion List. As a result, the LRA faces indictments from the International Criminal Court, and the United Nations Security Council has noted the LRA as a threat to Uganda's stability.

Additionally, the LRA has abducted more than 25,000 children since 1986. In conflict-affected districts such as Gulu and Kitgum, around 40,000 unaccompanied children, known as "night commuters," walk from their homes in outlying villages to urban centers every night in search of protection from the LRA.

### **Human Rights**

Uganda is dominated by accounts of torture and human rights abuses, including the extensive use of child soldiers. While the Uganda Human Rights Commission was established in the mid-1990s to promote and protect human rights, according to multiple human rights organizations claim Uganda is dominated by accounts of torture and human rights abuses.

As mentioned above, the conflict has produced large populations of displaced persons—both internally and externally. These people are almost entirely dependent upon humanitarian support for their survival. In addition, by December 2005, Uganda was host to more than 140,000 refugees, mainly from Sudan, Rwanda and the DRC. With the help of the Ugandan Government, the U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and other partners, refugees are being housed in over 60 communities around the country.



The following references constitute a survey of information available about the conflict, the peace process, terrorism and human rights in Uganda. This list is by no means exhaustive, but is meant to provide the reader with a representative sample of information in the field. The citations are organized first by topic and then by author. The plethora of entries about the peace process is a reflection of the international community's focus on this topic.

### **Background to the Conflict and General Information**

2006. "Tea with the Messiah." *New Statesman* 135 (4810): 30-32.

Annotation: The author describes her experience of interviewing Yoweri Museveni, the leader of Uganda. Once considered an African leader of a new type, more concerned with his country than with his own power, Museveni had become, by 2006, a more typical African head of state.

Caruso, N. 2006. "Refuge from the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda: A Report from a *Medecins Sans Frontieres* Team Leader." *Emergency Medicine Australasia* 18 (3): 295-298.

Annotation: In 2005, the author worked for *Medecins Sans Frontieres* (MSF, or Doctors without Borders) in northern Uganda. His short report shares some background information on MSF, the situation in northern Uganda as a consequence of the activities of the LRA, the work of the MSF project, and his personal experience there.

Eriksen, S.S. 2005. "The Congo War and the Prospects for State Formation: Rwanda and Uganda Compared." *Third World Quarterly* 26 (7): 1097-1113.

Annotation: In this article, the author analyzes the effects of the Congo war on state power in Rwanda and Uganda. Drawing on theories of European state formation, he argues that the Congo war has not led to a strengthening of the state in either country. He describes how the war has weakened the state of Uganda, and asserts that the remarkable strength of the Rwandan

state, just a few years after the 1994 genocide, must be understood as a result of the security threat faced by the regime from Hutu militias, and not as a result of the Congo war. The author shows how this demonstrates that security threats against the regime can, in certain circumstances, have the same effect on state formation as war had in early modern Europe.

Institute for Security Studies. 2007. [“ISS Country File: Uganda.”](#)

Annotation: This regularly updated website includes key economic, political, social, and demographic information about Uganda. It includes historical and geographical information as well. It also links to multiple reports and analyses about recent events in the country, including terrorist and human rights activity.

Taylor, I. 2006. “China’s Oil Diplomacy in Africa.” *International Affairs* 82 (5): 937-959.

Annotation: The author offers an analysis of China’s growing expansion into Africa’s oil markets. He argues that while China is providing investment where little previously existed, concerns about Beijing’s engagement with Africa’s oil industries need to be resolved, not least by African leaders themselves. According to the author, Chinese oil diplomacy in Africa has two main goals: in the short-term, to secure oil supplies to help feed growing domestic demand back in China; and in the long-term, to position China as a global player in the international oil market. He suggests China’s pursuit of oil is accompanied by an explicit stance that emphasizes state sovereignty and “non-interference” in domestic affairs, and is wholly disinterested in transparency or human rights. He also asserts that Beijing has increasingly turned a blind eye to autocracy and corruption in Africa, and is threatening to undercut efforts by the African Union and its Western partners to make government and business more accountable.

### **The Lord’s Resistance Army**

Finnstrom, S. 2006. “Wars of the Past and War in the Present: The Lord’s Resistance Movement/Army in Uganda.” *Africa* 76 (2): 200-220.

Annotation: Based on anthropological fieldwork with young, displaced Ugandan men, this article focuses on the war in northern Uganda. The author exemplifies the ways in which non-combatants’ experiences of the war and violence are domesticated as strategies of coping. Finnstrom also relates tales of wars in the past to experiences of violent death and war in the present. Furthermore, the article explores the politicized debate in Uganda over whether or not the LRM/A rebels have the elders’ ceremonial warfare blessing. The author interprets the possible warfare blessing—which some informants interpreted as having turned into a curse on Acholiland—as a critical event benefiting from further deliberation, regardless of its existence or non-existence.

Price, S. 2006. "Uganda a Huge Dilemma." *New African* (453): 34-35.

Annotation: In this article, the author discusses speculations on the possible end of the Lord's Resistance Army's insurgent activities in Uganda. The author refers to a videotaped meeting of rebel leader Joseph Kony with officials of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, indicating that Kony wants peace talks with Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. In the video, Kony explains that media and the government have branded him as a terrorist.

### **Peace Process**

2005. "How to Help Wars End." *The Economist* 374 (8708): 11-12.

Annotation: This article is an examination of the impact of truces signed in the Sudan, Senegal and Uganda. According to the report, truces are common in Africa, and often signal no more than that the rainy season has made the roads impassable, or that both sides need a break to buy more bullets.

2006. "Pressure Mounts to End Neglect of the North." *Africa Confidential* 47 (15): 2-2.

Annotation: The article is a presentation of information on the mounting international pressure on Uganda's President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni to end the two decades-old conflict between the government and the LRA. According to the report, about 100,000 people have died due to the war.

2006. "Revamped Truce." *Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social & Cultural Series* 43 (11): 16870-16871.

Annotation: This article is a report on the signing of the most recent peace agreement between the Ugandan government and the rebel LRA in Juba, South Sudan. The agreement aims to end the existing war in northern Uganda.

2006. "UGANDA: Ceasefire Extended." *Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social & Cultural Series* 43 (12): 16908-16908.

Annotation: This article is a report on the extension of ceasefire by the Lord's Resistance Army and the Government of Uganda with Sudan. The talks between the LRA peace negotiators led by Martin Ojul and South Sudan Vice-President Rick Machar were held at Juba Raha Hotel on December 17, 2006.

2006. "Uganda: ICC Adamant." *Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social & Cultural Series* 43 (5): 16660-16660.

Annotation: The article is a report on President Yoweri Museveni's announcement that Uganda and South Sudan have given Joseph Kony until July to end hostilities. Included is a report that the International Criminal Court (ICC) said it expects Uganda to arrest the LRA leader because Uganda referred the case to the Court and must honor its commitment.

2006. "Will Kony Come Out of the Bush?" *The Economist* 381 (8500): 56-57.

Annotation: The article is an analysis of talks aimed at ending the conflict in Uganda, where one of Africa's longest and most savage civil wars is occurring. According to the report, leaders of LRA insist that there can be no peace deal unless the ICC drops its indictments against four of its members. Uganda's government referred the conflict to the ICC in January of 2004 after the peace process stalled.

De Zeeuw, J. 2005. "Projects Do Not Create Institutions: The Record of Democracy Assistance in Post-Conflict Societies." *Democratization* 12 (4): 481-504.

Annotation: Focusing on international electoral assistance, human rights, and the media, the author reviews the practical experiences of eight post-conflict countries: Cambodia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, El Salvador and Guatemala. He argues that the lack of focus on institution-building greatly limits the potential impact of international democracy assistance on post-conflict societies. Drawing from the recent work of local research teams within a major comparative research project, he concludes that international assistance has been instrumental in setting up new organizations, but relatively unsuccessful in consolidating effective democratic institutions. He argues that the international community's "democracy template" is particularly ill-suited to achieve democracy in post-conflict countries.

Gettleman, J. 2006. "Uganda Peace Hinges on Amnesty for Brutality." *New York Times* 155 (53703): A1-A6.

Annotation: The author reports that a cease-fire agreement between the Ugandan government and the rebel group, the Lord's Resistance Army, may depend upon whether or not the rebels are granted amnesty. He describes that this outcome is uncertain, because leaders of the LRA have been charged with crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court in The Hague.



Hegland, C. 2007. "Uganda's Peace at Mercy of Court." *National Journal* 39 (6): 53-54.

Annotation: The author offers insights on the call for peace talks by Joseph Kony, leader of the Lord's Resistance Army of northern Uganda, and LRA commanders, after they were indicted by the International Criminal Court in The Hague for crimes against humanity. The author describes briefly Kony's role in the war in Uganda, and presents various perspectives regarding the peace process.

Lamb, I. 2006. "From Horror to Hope: The Story of the Ugandan Conflict." *New Presence: The Prague Journal of Central European Affairs* 8 (3): 20-24.

Annotation: The author provides an examination of the conflict in Uganda between government forces and the Lord's Resistance Army. He suggests that a renewed possibility of peace offers a glimmer of hope to a country that has been devastated by decades of fighting. However, he cautions that whatever the outcome of the peace process may be, the protracted conflict in the country raises many other questions, including the inattentiveness of the international community to this conflict.

Mwaniki, D. and M. Wepundi. 2007. "[The Juba Peace Talks—the Checkered Road to Peace for Northern Uganda.](#)" *Situation Report*. Institute for Security Studies.

Annotation: The authors give a detailed description and analysis of the Juba peace talks in this report. They also include description and analysis of the history of conflict in Uganda, and of the Lord's Resistance Army and the Museveni government. They explore the implications of the Museveni government's designation of the LRA as a terrorist organization.

Quaranto, P. 2006. "Ending the Real Nightmares of Northern Uganda." *Peace Review* 18(1): 137-144.

Annotation: The author comments on the war between the government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army. The article describes how the United States government has fostered a strong working relationship with the government of Uganda, in support of efforts against AIDS and terrorism, but that, as of 2006, the American government had solely supported military efforts to end the war. The author argues the U.S. has provided no support to catalyze a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

Taylor, J. 2005. "Taking Spirituality Seriously: Northern Uganda and Britain's 'Break the Silence' Campaign." *Round Table* 94 (382): 559-574.

Annotation: The author describes conditions in Northern Uganda and relates them to the history of the 'Break the Silence' Campaign, initiated and coordinated by the Church Mission Society. The campaign significantly increased political activity in Northern Uganda. The author argues international religious solidarity, and particularly Christian churches, broke the dehumanizing and isolating circle of secular indifference to the war, and utilized largely untapped resources for crisis resolution and peace building.

### **Terrorism**

2005. "National Security: Uganda." *Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social & Cultural Series* 42 (10): 16405-16407.

Annotation: This article is a report on the issue of an arrest warrant served to Joseph Kony, one of the commanders of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International hailed the warrants against LRA commanders accused of war crimes as a positive measure. The organizations also called for all government's cooperation in apprehending Kony for trial at International Criminal Court headquarters.

2006. "ARMS TRADE: Kenya, Uganda Pact to Curb Trade." *Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social & Cultural Series* 43 (5): 16662-16662.

Annotation: The article reports on a communiqué between Kenya and Uganda to curb the trade of firearms. Kenya and Ugandan border commissioners signed the Fifth Joint Communiqué, which proposed that the two countries cooperate and contain the flow of illegal small arms. The agreement called for a joint approach on terrorism, disarmament, and cattle rustling.

### **Human Rights**

2007. "Rough justice." *Africa Confidential* 48 (7): 8-9.

Annotation: The article reports on the condition of the justice system in Uganda. The military raid on the High Court in Kampala on March 1, 2007 has alarmed the Museveni government. It is stated that the President hosted a judiciary meeting on March 16 to deal with the crisis. He supported the U.S. attacks on Iraq, and offers logistical support for the Somalia mission.

Butagira, F. K. 2005. "Human Rights Dominate the Development Agenda." *UN Chronicle* 42 (4): 14-16.

Annotation: The author reports on the importance of the Third Committee of the United Nations' General Assembly in developing social, cultural, and humanitarian commitment as discussed at the 2005 World Summit in New York City. He describes the range of the Committee's concerns, including issues of international drug control and indigenous rights. He also describes the Committee's recommended 59 resolutions to the General Assembly, and focuses on its resolution to establish reparations for victims of human rights abuses.

Caruso, J. and K. Cope 2006. "The Lost Generation: How the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations Are Protecting the Rights of Orphans in Uganda." *Human Rights Review* 7 (2): 98-114.

Annotation: The author describes how millions of Ugandan children have become orphaned over the last two decades as a result of the increasing HIV/AIDS epidemic. He shows how this phenomenon has prompted the government to institute numerous legal reforms, and describes how these internal reforms greatly influence the legal inheritance rights of Ugandan orphans and their chances for prosperity. He argues that in many regions, the local traditions trump both national and global standards. The author describes key impediments to solving this problem and offers suggestions for significant reforms.

Cohen, J., R. Schleifer, *et. al.* 2005. "AIDS in Uganda: the Human-Rights Dimension." *Lancet* 365 (9477): 2075-2076.

Annotation: In this article, the authors analyze the issue of abstinence and Uganda's successes in HIV prevention. They argue that it is dangerous to assume that abstinence is the sole cause for Uganda's HIV decline, and suggest that abstinence programs funded by the United States have a history of censoring or distorting information about any other method of HIV prevention. The authors highlight potential issues involving human rights that they believe are ignored by a policy of abstinence-only HIV prevention.

IRIN. 2006. ["Uganda: Interview with Jan Egeland, U.N. Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs."](#) 2007.

Annotation: In this interview, Jan Egeland describes how northern Uganda has been the scene of one of the most brutal civil wars in the world for the past two decades. He describes the humanitarian emergency there, and calls the conflict "the worst form of terrorism in the world."

IRIN. 2007. [“Uganda: IDPs Begin Slow Journey Home amid Concerns Over Peace Process.”](#) 2007.

Annotation: This report is a description of IDPs’ experiences and the challenges they face in returning home in light of the peace talks between the Ugandan government and the LRA.

Nabacwa, M. S. 2005. “Gender Networking and Advocacy Work in Uganda: Controlling the Agenda and Strategies of Resistance.” *Gender & Development* 13 (3): 34-41.

Annotation: The author describes the complex relationships among donors, advocacy networks, member NGOs, national NGOs, and women at the grassroots level who are undertaking gender advocacy work in Uganda. Her research considers advocacy to promote gender equality, and shows how this activity both affects, and is shaped by, power relationships among the various actors involved. She asserts that donors and national NGOs accept that there is a need for advocacy, in order to raise the profile of key gender issues and to try to influence policy and practice. However, she believes they have different motives for doing this work, and describes how their agendas may diverge from each other at times. She argues that ultimately, this divergence affects the quality of the work they do to represent the interests of Ugandan women.

Otunnu, O. A. 2006. “Death of a People.” *Christian Century* 123 (8): 11-12.

Annotation: The author reflects on the difficulties experienced by those interned in concentration camps by the government of Uganda. According to his report, the government uses the activity of the Lord’s Resistance Army to divert attention away from its concentration camps, which are accused of perpetuating human rights violations such as the denial of education to children as a government policy. The author suggests the dismantling of the camps should not be made contingent on ending the war against the LRA.

Otunnu, O. A. 2006. “The Secret Genocide.” *Foreign Policy* (155): 44-46.

Annotation: The author of this article describes genocide and other human rights violations in Uganda. According to the author, the LRA has abducted an estimated 25,000 children during the Sudanese conflict. The author points out that what most people do not realize is that the Ugandan government itself is also perpetrating serious crimes, specifically the destruction of the Acholi people in concentration camps.

Sheikh, F. 2006. "Return of the Stolen Girls." *Ms.* 16 (2): 24-25.

Annotation: The author describes the experiences of Ugandan women and girls in the hands of the Lord's Resistance Army. She narrates the experiences of 25-year-old Milly Amongy under the hands of her husband Lieutenant Colonel John Odour, the commander of the LRA who was known as Acel Calo Apar. The author details how the young woman escaped from him in 2005.