Research Report

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Forum: *General Assembly First Committee*
Issue: *The situation in Uganda concerning the Lord's Resistance Army*
Position: *Deputy Chair*

Introduction

Since 1987, a Christian rebel group called the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been terrorising parts of Uganda, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic. It has been targeting attacks on innocent civilians, killing the weak and old and cutting off people's ears, lips and noses as a warning to others. Not only do they torture and kill innocent civilians, they also abduct children forcing them to fight in their rebel forces. The rebels in the army follow strict rules and rituals, like drawing a cross on their chest with a specific kind of oil, which is believed to bring luck during battle. Captives and rebels who do not follow these rules or try to escape the army will be tortured and killed.

The man responsible for all this is Joseph Kony. He claims to be a freedom fighter, denying all the terrible things the LRA does to innocent civilians. Kony says that the objectives of the LRA are freedom for the people in Uganda and a total democracy in Uganda, ruled according to the Ten Commandments in the Holy Bible.

Definition of Key Terms

Ten Commandments
Ten rules to live by, believed to be given by God to the people. As written down in the Holy Bible. The rules include instructions to not worship several gods, honour your parents, keep the Sabbath, as well as prohibitions against blasphemy, idolatry, adultery, stealing, coveting, false witnessing, murder and theft.

Acholi people
An ethnic group living in northern Uganda and southern South Sudan. The Acholi find themselves in the middle of the war, not being linked to both the LRA as well as the Ugandan government.

Internally displaced person
A person who has been forced to flee his or her home as a result of conflict, natural disaster, etc., but remains within the borders of his or her own country.

General Overview

In the 19th century, several ethnic groups in the south of Uganda, such as the Baganda people, developed differently in terms of economic and social structure compared to a major ethnic group in the north of Uganda, the Acholi people, whose economic system was centred around hunting and farming. This ethnic and cultural competition between the more developed Baganda and less developed Acholi continued to exist during the British Protectorate of Uganda, which was created in 1894. The army created by the British in Uganda was made up mostly by the Acholi and other small northern ethnic groups, as they supplied most of the manual labour in the country. Even after Uganda's independence in 1962, these ethnic groups continued to compete with each other and the social and economical differences between the groups would not fade.

From 1981 to 1986, a guerrilla war called the Ugandan Bush War occurred. In this war, the Uganda National Liberation Army led by the government opposed the National Resistance Army led by Yoweri Museveni. When Museveni won the war in 1986, he became president of Uganda and sought vengeance against the Acholi people by attacking their villages and killing most of them. Following these atrocities, a woman called Alice Auma claimed to have been possessed by the spirit Lakwena, which told her to create a Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) to end the ongoing attacks and killings against Acholi people. She did so and after the HSM scored several victories, the movement began to march to Kampala, the capital of Uganda. The HSM was ultimately defeated in the Jinja district in 1988 and Lakwena fled to Kenya. After the defeat of the movement, Joseph Kony seized this opportunity to recruit former HSM fighters and managed to get them to fight in his newly-created Lord's Resistance Army. Kony was inspired by Lakwena in creating the LRA, although the LRA generally used more violence in obtaining their goals than the HSM did. The LRA occasionally carried out local attacks to underline the inability of the government to protect the population.

In early 1991, the government of Uganda launched “Operation North”, a campaign to eliminate the LRA threat and end support for the LRA among the local community. As part of the operation, the government created “Arrow Groups”, which functioned as local defence forces and were armed with bows and arrows. This operation failed, however, as the LRA owned much more modern weaponry and the Arrow Groups were easily defeated. After the failure of the operation, the first face-to-face negotiations between representatives of both the government and the LRA were initiated by Betty Bigombe, a Ugandan minister charged with ending the insurgency. Although the meetings took place for several months, the two parties continued to disagree with each other and negotiations were entirely cut off in February 1994. Soon afterward, the insurgency intensified and no significant efforts towards peace would be made until the next decade.

In March 2002, the Uganda People's Defence Force, the national armed forces of Uganda, launched a massive military offensive against the LRA in southern Sudan, called “Operation Iron Fist”. The fight between the UPDF and LRA lasted

for what was several months, but the LRA eventually began crossing back into Uganda and carried out attacks in a brutal manner not seen since 1996. Lots of the people in Uganda suffered from these attacks, especially refugees in camps such as Achol-Pi and Maaji in the north of Uganda, which the rebels raided and looted. Part of the failure of the operation was due to the large amount of supplies and weaponry the LRA accumulated in the time it was supported by the Sudanese government.

Following the failure of Operation Iron Fist, the government tried to create more diplomatic initiatives between the two sides, but these efforts failed again as the LRA was not able to define an agenda and negotiate terms credibly. Meanwhile, the government had shown an predilection for military solutions instead of diplomatic negotiations and peace talks. The UPDF created militias in the north of Uganda, arming people with assault rifles. Some people feared that providing weapons to the population would only create more problems in the future.

United Nations diplomat Jan Egeland visited Uganda in November 2003 and raised attention, saying that he could not "find any other part of the world that is having an emergency on the scale of Uganda, that is getting such little international attention." The United Nations Security Council condemned the atrocities committed by the LRA, as well as the plight of displaced children in April 2004. The International Criminal Court (ICC) formally opened an investigation on Joseph Kony and some of his senior lieutenants in 2004, although this investigation was believed to make a negotiated end to the conflict nearly impossible.

Over the years, the LRA continued targeting attacks among the population, resulting in lots of displaced, abducted and killed persons. The government of Uganda implemented a ceasefire lasting for 18 days in early 2005. Various ministers and mediators said that the peace process was now on course, and that the president was ready to end the war peacefully. However, after the ceasefire, the fight between the government and the LRA continued again and the attacks on civilians would not stop. Attempts on diplomatic negotiations were also made, but these meetings would often not result in peaceful solutions.

In June 2006, Kony revealed himself to the public and was interviewed for the first time by a British journalist in one of the LRA-camps in the DR Congo. In the interview, he repeatedly says that he is not guilty of any warcrime, denying the atrocities carried out by the LRA, and blaming president Museveni for them. "I cannot cut the ear of my brother; I cannot kill the eye of my brother; I cannot kill my brother", he said.

Less than a month later, the next peace talks were held in Juba, South Sudan. Kony was present at these peace talks, but there is significant evidence that he ordered his soldiers to attack villages and abduct children during the time that he

was away. The LRA set up a camp in Garamba National Park, in northeastern DR Congo, where they continued targeting attacks at the Congolese population.
A Cessation of Hostilities was signed by both the government of Uganda and the LRA in August 2006, followed by more peace talks over the next two years. When the Final Peace Agreement was due to be signed in April and November 2008 however, Kony failed to show up and the agreement was eventually not signed. It is believed that Kony entered the talks as a way of resting and regrouping, instead of actually wanting to reach peaceful solutions.

Following this, "Operation Lightning Thunder" was launched by the Ugandan government in early December 2008. It was meant as a joint offensive on the camp set up in Garamba, led by Uganda, the DR Congo and South Sudan. The mission failed due to leaky intelligence within the operating governments which gave the LRA advance warnings of raids, poor coordination meaning that the ground forces didn't show up on time, and last but not least, mutual antipathy between the governments which prevented them from cooperating and communicating efficiently.

Operation Lightning Thunder was definitely not a success, which showed in the following attacks carried out by the LRA during Christmas 2008, also known as the Christmas Massacres. More than 400 people were killed and 160 were abducted during these attacks, taking place in northeastern DR Congo. One year later, in December 2009, the LRA attacked the Makombo district in northeastern DR Congo, reminding everyone of the massacres from one year earlier. According to Human Rights Watch, 321 people were killed and 250 killed.

Until this day, attacks carried out by the LRA are still happening, not only in Uganda, but also in South Sudan, DR Congo and the Central African Republic, and the population of those countries is still being terrorised. The investigation by the ICC is still ongoing, and one of the ex-commanders of the LRA is currently detained and awaiting trial. The USA, also an involved country in this conflict, have implemented sanctions on the LRA in March 2016, such as putting the organisation on a financial blacklist. Organisations such as "The Resolve LRA Crisis Initiative" and "Invisible Children" have been created specifically to eradicate the LRA, in which they are putting lots of effort in the form of public campaigns and military missions. However, there are still not enough measures being taken, both by involved governments as well as international (non-governmental) organisations, to solve the issue wholly.

Major Parties Involved

Uganda

As this is the country where the conflict arose and which government Kony is fighting against, this country is involved most in the issue. The government of Uganda first fought against the LRA with the National Resistance Army, which later became the Uganda People's Defence Force.

South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic
The LRA has also been carrying out attacks and raids in parts of these countries, killing and abducting lots of people as well as leaving them internally displaced. Together with the government of Uganda, these countries have participated in several operations to eradicate the LRA.

The Resolve LRA Crisis Initiative
Cooperating with Invisible Children, the main objective of this organisation is decisively defeating the LRA. The Resolve mobilises citizen-powered campaigns aimed at moving policymakers to action to address the LRA crisis, as well as providing reports and briefs on the conflict.

Invisible Children
This organisation is similar to The Resolve, however, beside creating awareness among people and moving policymakers to action to help resolve the crisis, Invisible Children also makes effort into defeating the LRA from within by helping abductees and rebels leave the army and come home.

International Criminal Court
The investigation on the LRA carried out by the ICC is still ongoing. Several (ex-)commanders of the LRA, including Joseph Kony himself, are prosecuted for having committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. The first of these commanders is awaiting his trial in December 2016.

Timeline of Events

1981-1986	Ugandan Bush War. After Museveni's victory in 1986, he became president of Uganda.
1987	Creation of the Lord's Resistance Army by Joseph Kony and begin of insurgency.
1988	Defeat of the Holy Spirit Movement and growth of the LRA.
1991	"Operation North", launched by the Ugandan government in South Sudan.
1993	First meetings between the LRA and the government of Uganda. The negotiations were cut off in 1994 after which the insurgency intensified.
2002	Operation Iron Fist: Ugandan government attacked the LRA in southern Sudan
2004	Start of the ICC investigation.

July 2006 - November 2008	Juba talks: negotiations between the LRA and the Ugandan government held in Juba, South Sudan.
14 December 2008	Operation Lightning Thunder: joint offensive between Uganda, South Sudan, DR Congo and CAR, in which they attacked the LRA in northeastern DR Congo
24-27 December 2008	Christmas Massacres
14-17 December 2009	Mokombo Massacres

Previous Attemps to solve the issue

There have been several military operations and offensives attempted by the involved governments in order to solve the issue. However, these operations have all failed, mostly due to lack of efficient cooperation and underestimation of the strength of the LRA.

When the first military operation failed, the government of Uganda started official negotiations with representatives of the LRA, which have carried on for years. Negotiations might have not led to a peaceful solution just yet, but it's still the most peaceful way to obtain a solution both parties agree on.

Not only involved governments have attempted actions, there have also been attempts to solve (parts of) this issue made by international organisations, such as the ongoing investigation of the ICC and the campaigns made by The Resolve and Invisible Children.

Possible Solutions

A possible solution for this issue would be continuing peace talks between the Ugandan government and the LRA, until a solid agreement is reached. When these negotiations really do not work, military operations would still be an option. However, when a decision is made to create a military operation, everything should be coordinated well and there should not be any antipathy between the governments cooperating.

Of course, raising awareness among the public is also a great way to partially help resolve a conflict. Human rights organisations, such as Human Rights Watch, UNICEF and UNHCR, and organisations focusing on the conflict itself, such as The Resolve and Invisible Children, should get full support of the public into resolving this crisis. Humanitarian missions can be made and as The Resolve tries, policymakers can be

moved to action to address the conflict.

Useful documents

General information about the LRA:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord%27s_Resistance_Army
More information about the actions taken by Invisible Children:
http://invisiblechildren.com/our-work/

Appendix/Appendices

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord%27s_Resistance_Army
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord%27s_Resistance_Army_insurgency
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https://www.icc-cpi.int/uganda
http://www.theresolve.org/what-we-do/citizen-campaigns/