



The Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative

Situational Report: March, 2010

Museveni Seeks Support For 'Bail Bill':

- In his pursuit to be tougher on those committing crimes, President Museveni is urging people to support a bill that will not allow suspects accused of rape, corruption and child sacrifice to be eligible for bail. Human rights critics are opposing the bill saying it denies people of their constitutional right to bail (OBSERVER).

"Whistleblowers Bill" being Debated in Parliament:

- A bill that seeks to make it easier to report corruption as well as provide protection to such individuals has been tabled in Parliament. Ethics Minister, Dr Nsaba Buturo, who is the architect of the new Bill, appealed for a common front against corruption, adding that the whistleblowers legislation was yet another government measure to stamp out corruption.

More IDP Camps are Phased Out in Amuru:

- The remains of about 187 people who died in the IDP camp and were buried in Pabbo Trading Centre, Amuru District, have been exhumed in an emotional camp-phase out ceremony. The ceremony symbolized the closure of 10 camps in Kilak County including Pabbo, which was the biggest in northern Uganda with 65,000 inhabitants (MONITOR).
- 14 camps including Pabbo, Atyak, Amuru, Awer, Keyo, Parabongo, Pagak, Guru-Guru, Lacor and Pawel in Kilak county and Anaka, Alero, Purongo and Aparanga in Nwoya county have been closed. Out of the original 121 IDP camps in Acholiland, 69 remain operational (NEW VISION).

Health Ministry To Crack Down on Abortions:

- The health ministry is to launch a special operation against health workers conducting illegal abortions from their clinics. The coordinator of the Uganda medical and dental practitioners' council Dr John Ndiku emphasized that abortion is contrary to the penal code (NEW VISION).

Petition Implicating Museveni Sent to ICC:

- Youth from the Inter-Party Cooperation (IPC) have filed a petition at the Hague against Museveni and 2 other top UPDF Officials over the killing of 42 people during the September 2009 riots in Kampala and parts of Buganda. Mengo has backed the petition which accuses the 3 individuals of ordering security forces to "shoot to kill or maim" the rioters. They are also alleged to have ordered the use of live ammunition against unarmed civilians (OBSERVER).

Army Ordered to Account for Guns Given to 'Arrow Boys' in Teso:

- Amuria district LC5 chairperson, Julius Ochen has ordered the UPDF to account for the guns given to the Arrow Boys to fight against the LRA. The guns are thought to have been used in violence during the 2006 elections and to solve land and sex disputes. There is a concern that the guns may be used again during next years elections as a means of intimidation (NEW VISION).

Opposition Seeks to Amend Constitution for Electoral Reform:

- The Opposition has sought leave of Parliament to bring a Bill that will amend the Constitution and allow for more landmark changes. Mr Christopher Kibazanga, the acting leader of the Opposition, wrote to the Speaker of Parliament, Mr Edward Ssekandi, notifying him of plans to table the Constitutional Amendment Bill 2009 to be discussed alongside four Bills brought by the government to the House. The Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee is currently reviewing the Presidential Election Amendment Bill 2009, the Parliamentary Elections Amendment Bill 2009, the Political Parties and Amendment Bill 2009 and the Electoral Commission Bill 2009. Although the Opposition has been invited to make input into the Bills, they argue that the changes required to correct anomalies in the country's electoral landscape require amending the Constitution, which the Government appears reluctant to do (MONITOR).

Amended 'Enguli Act' Proposes to Close Bars by 10pm:

- The proposed Bill, which aims at curbing alcohol abuse in the country states that all bars in Kampala should close by 10pm and also stipulates that bars should remain closed during the day and only open at 5:00pm. Up-country drinking joints are only allowed to open between 5:00pm and 8:00pm. Those who would like to drink beyond 8:00pm (for up-country) and 10:00pm (for towns) will have an option of going to hotels (NEW VISION).

Human Rights Organizations Criticize Press and Journalists (Amendment) Bill, 2010:

- The media fraternity and human rights activists have rejected the proposed Press and Journalists (Amendment) Bill, 2010 stating it goes against freedom of press. Among other things, the Bill seeks to amend the existing Act to create offenses and penalties against media houses that publish material prejudicial to national security, stability and unity. The media houses shall also be punished for utterances that are injurious to Uganda's relations with her neighbors or friendly countries or those that tantamount to economic sabotage (MONITOR).

U.S. LRA Disarmament Bill Passes Through U.S. Senate:

- The Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act has passed through U.S. Senate. To become law, the bill must be passed by the House of Representatives and signed by the U.S. president. If done, it would require the U.S. government to work with multilateral partners "to develop a viable path to disarm the LRA, while ensuring the protection of civilians (AMERICA.GOV).

GoU to Compensate LRA Victims:

- The government will compensate victims of the Lord's Resistance Army insurgency in Lango sub-region. Museveni said those whose lips, ears and limbs were cut would be compensated and relatives of those who were killed would also be financially supported through programmes like the National Agricultural Advisory Services and the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (MONITOR).

International Criminal Court Bill Passed:

- On March 10th, the International Criminal Court Bill 2006 was passed by Parliament which if approved by Museveni, the Uganda's War Crimes Court will become operational and pave the way for the trial and conviction in Uganda of people accused of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity. The Bill has received criticism over Article 98 which despite provisions of the constitution to the contrary, grants immunity for a sitting President (INDEPENDENT).

Uganda is First to Ratify AU Convention for Protection and Assistance of IDP's:

- Uganda became the first AU Member State to ratify the AU Convention for the protection and assistance of the Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). Its instruments for ratification of the Convention with the Commission were deposited on 4 March 2010. To be binding, the convention must be signed by 15 member states (AFRICAN UNION).

LRA Activity During the Month of March:

Sudan:

- A report by ENOUGH claims that a fraction of the LRA has found refuge in Darfur and with assistance by the Khartoum government. Bashir's government has denied the claims (ENOUGH & REUTERS).
- On March 31st, LRA Political Commissar, Okello Mission, was captured by UPDF soldiers at Ezo in Southern Sudan. Okello was in a unit of 10 rebels, led by Felly Otimi, an escort to LRA leader Joseph Kony (NEW VISION).
- A captured LRA political Commissar, Okello Mission claimed that members of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) met with the LRA in Darfur in October, 2009 where it was promised they would give them safe passage to central Sudan, as well as food and medicines. Asked about the whereabouts of the LRA leader, Okello said Kony was in eastern Congo with his army commander, Okot Odhiambo. He estimates the number of fighters left to be around 200 (NEW VISION).

- Eyewitnesses reported on March 30th that that suspected LRA rebels attacked Nartiza Village six miles from Yambio. One of the citizens, Simon Tito, whose house was looted stated that five armed men in LRA uniforms attacked his house and abducted his grandfather. The commissioner of Yambio county, David Beilly, acknowledged the presence of the LRA activities in the area but declined to confirm the incident (MIRAYA FM).

DR Congo:

- A report from ENOUGH claims that the Congolese Army (FARDC), is failing to protect civilians from the LRA and instead are engaging in rape, looting, beating and killings of the local population (ENOUGH).
- On March 15th, Monsignor Fridolin Ambongo Besungu, bishop of the dioceses of Bokungu-Ikela and President of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Episcopal Conference stated his concern regarding food insecurity as a result of that LRA violence which prevented the planting of crops (MISNA).
- On March 16th, 'Second Lieutenant' Geoffrey Okello, 'Sergeant' Geoffrey Okonga and 'Captain' Jasper Moroto surrendered to the UPDF. They reported to the UPDF with three guns and an abducted girl, Agnes Amune, who came back with two children (NEW VISION).
- UNOCHA reports a reduction in LRA violence with seven attacks in February against 26 in January (UNOCHA).
- Between the 11th & 14th of March, it was reported that the LRA attacked the communities in Dungu (Bangadi, Duru & Doruma) killing 8 FARDC soldiers and up to 11 civilians (RADIO OKAPI/AFP).
- Human Rights Watch released a report claiming that the LRA killed over 360 civilians and abducted 260 more during an previously unreported attack in December, 2009. The UPDF has disputed the report (NEW VISION, MONITOR).
- Since 26 March, 58 people (men, women and children) arrived in the town of Kpete DRC. On March 28, 2010 more than 50 people have crossed the river Mbomou for shelter in the town of Kpete. That, following the recent LRA incursions in the locality of Central Rafai since March 2010. Parish Rafai was systematically looted, the Catholic missionaries were forced to flee (CARITAS).

Central African Republic:

- It is reported that LRA violence in CAR has contributed to the displacement of over 200,000 civilians inside the country, while 80,000 have fled to Cameroon and another 57,000 have escaped to Chad (ALERTNET).
- It was reported that three attacks by the LRA between March 21 and March 28th claimed 26 lives including 10 civilians, according to a CAR military source. 16 rebels were killed by villagers and Ugandan troops (AFP). Over 50 other civilians were abducted (REUTERS).
- A Residents Association asks for military support after reporting that since 2008, 200 civilians have been killed by the LRA and another 400 abducted (AFP).
- Women presented a petition to the Prefect for the government, demanding the departure of Ugandan forces and also denounced violence against women by the elements the LRA. The Women's Petition was echoed in Bangassou. According to the women of Bangassou, Ugandan forces were complicit in the LRA rebels. They made the observation that each time the Ugandan soldiers in a city, fighters from the Lord's Resistance Army arise (CONFIDANT).

For more information on the above, please contact ARLPI's Information, Documentation and Research Officer at pressing_forward@hotmail.com or +256 (0) 782807156.

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New Reports:

The following is a list of new reports and documents available for review. To request a copy, please contact ARLPI's Information, Documentation and Research Officer at +256 (0) 782807156 or pressing_forward@hotmail.com.

ARLPI Reports:

- Pursuing Peaceful Means to End the LRA Conflict: Recommendations by ARLPI (Pending Approval)

Other Reports:

- Trail of Death: LRA Atrocities in Northeastern Congo (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH)
- Between a Rock and a Hard Place: LRA Attacks and Congolese Army Ambushes in Northeastern Congo (ENOUGH)
- Justice & Reconciliation Project Annual Report (JRP)
- Mediation Practice Series: External Actors in Mediation (CENTRE FOR HUMANITRIAN DIALOGUE).