

11
Nw Kadunga

See and get copy of
petition and bring to attention
of RACR Committee

**INVISIBLE
CHILDREN**

6/8/13

Regional Office:
Plot 24 Bazzaribusa Rise, Bugolobi,
P.O. Box 37041 Kampala, Uganda.
Ph: 0752 300720 / 0414 22 18 45
Fax: 0471433247
Web: www.invisiblechildren.com
Email: uginfo@invisiblechildren.com

Re: ICRO/ADM/PAT/017

June 5 2013

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Zziwa
Speaker of the East African Legislative Assembly
Arusha - TANZANIA

Madam Speaker,

BRIEFING EALA MEMBERS AND SEEKING THEIR SUPPORT

Greetings from Invisible Children. Invisible Children has for the last ten years been engaged in advocacy work for the people, especially children, affected by the war in Northern Uganda. Using a multimedia approach, Invisible Children has documented the suffering of war victims and their daily struggle to survive against great odds. Invisible Children has also carried out global campaigns especially in the United States Congress, the White House, the United Nations and selected European capitals to create awareness about the impact of the LRA war and demand a conscious policy response by key decision makers aimed at ending the war and rehabilitating the victims.

We have campaigned successfully to secure the support of the US Government towards the hunt for Joseph Kony and also for interventions in support of rehabilitation of the war ravaged communities. Through independent fundraising initiatives, we run a number of programmes including school construction and rehabilitation, sponsorship of disadvantaged students at both secondary and tertiary levels, provision of water to displaced people returning home, and agricultural programs.

Currently we are also engaged in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR) to help trace and rehabilitate ex-rebel combatants and former abductees escaping from the LRA. We have been witnesses to serious violations of human rights and all kinds of gruesome crimes and abuses. We have engaged the affected communities and authorities in DRC and CAR as a sign of solidarity.

We continue to do our best but we need the support of legislators in the region. The purpose of this letter is therefore to seek an audience with you, Madam Speaker, in order to brief you about our work and to present a petition relating to the regional dimensions of the LRA. We also seek your support to enable us meet with EALA members and brief them about the situation in DRC and CAR with the hope that you will support our proposal for a field visit and fact finding mission led by EALA for purposes of better understanding the situation.

Gulu Office: Plot 101 Acholi Road, P.O. Box 1123 Gulu, Uganda, Ph: 0159221845/04714332583, Fax: 0471433247
Pader Office: Block 11, Lira Road, P.O. Box 101, Pader Ph: 0471433247/0757 433247
DRC Office: Dimphe Road, Kinshasa DRC +24397247809 +243814623346 +243810761587

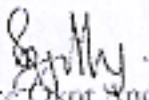
I
clear

Received them
at 2:00 PM
had a good discussion
They presented a
petition
to be
looked @ by

Committee
of Regional
Affairs &
General Purposes
Zziwa

We are happy to meet you at your earliest convenience. We will also appreciate if you assign a member to liaise with us as we plan the visit to your office, the briefing of members and the proposed trip to DRC and CAR.

I remain yours sincerely,


Jolly Grace Okor Andruvile
Regional Ambassador
Invisible Children- East and Central Africa

Cc: file





Regional Office-Kampala:

Address: Plot 24 Bazarabusa Rise, Bugolobi P.O Box 37041 Kampala, Uganda.

Phone: +256 752300720/ +256 471 432583

August 2, 2013

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Zziwa

Speaker of the East African Legislative Assembly

Arusha -Tanzania.

**PETITION BY INVISIBLE CHILDREN TO THE EAST AFRICAN
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CALLING FOR INTERVENTION TO END THE
LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY CONFLICT**

Madam Speaker,

First, allow us to thank you for giving us this opportunity to present to you this petition calling for your intervention to stem the continued security threat posed by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to regional stability and also to brief you about the work done by Invisible Children to end LRA, presently Africa's longest running armed conflict.

This is a humble petition presented under rule 85, of the East African Legislative Assembly Rules of procedure, 2001 by Invisible Children, a registered non- governmental organization in Uganda whose address is P.O Box 37041, Plot 24, Bazarabusa Rise, Bugolobi- Kampala- Uganda, (+256) 752300720.

Invisible Children acknowledges the key role played by EALA in resolving regional conflicts like EALA's role in ending the violence following the 2007 Kenyan elections.

We also remember with profound joy a May 2003 resolution by this parliament seeking the appointment of an East African Peace Committee for Uganda with the mandate of bringing an end to the the violence in Northern Uganda, in pursuance of Articles 123 and 124 of the Treaty.

Madam Speaker, this however seems to have started and ended it all. We are concerned that EALA remains conspicuously silent on the issue of the LRA.

gml



Regional Office-Kampala:

Address: Plot 24 Bazarabusa Rise, Bugolobi P.O Box 37041 Kampala, Uganda.

Phone: +256 752300720/ +256 471 432583

EALA's deafening silence on this very important issue is alarming and a point of concern to people and communities affected by the LRA conflict.

Information being key before any meaningful intervention on your part, we are here to provide you with update information about continued LRA activities.

Invisible Children is an international non-governmental organization that was formed in response to LRA war in northern Uganda with an aim of bringing a permanent end to this conflict and improve the quality of life of LRA affected communities. Invisible Children has since grown in operations and now also has offices in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR) and California, USA. We also work in South Sudan through allies and partner organisations.

We have been witnesses to serious violations of human rights and all kinds of gruesome, inhuman, barbaric and cruel acts and abuses by the LRA. Using a multimedia approach including documentaries, Invisible Children has documented the suffering of the war victims in the affected countries and their daily struggle to survive against great odds with a view drawing new audiences to this conflict and inspire our collective responsibility to act against it.

Invisible Children has also carried out global campaigns especially in the United States Congress, the White House, the United Nations and selected European capitals to create awareness about the impact of the LRA war and to demand a conscious policy response by key decision makers to end the war and rehabilitate war victims.

We successfully campaigned to secure the support of the US Government towards the hunt for Joseph Kony and also for interventions in support of rehabilitation of the war ravaged communities in East and Central Africa. Through independent fundraising initiatives, we run a number of programmes in LRA affected communities including sponsorship of disadvantaged students at both secondary and tertiary levels, school construction and rehabilitation, provision of water to displaced people returning home and livelihood programs for women formerly abducted by the LRA.

Madam Speaker, we also promote defection of LRA combatants through Come Home radio broadcasts, distribution of defection fliers, helicopter mounted speakers and community sensitisation in LRA affected areas. Presently, we also run rehabilitation programs for LRA returnees in Uganda and DRC.

LRA numbers

Madam Speaker, the LRA conflict cannot be said to be over just because it's no longer operating on Ugandan soil, which was home to its fatal activities for over two decades.

The end of its gruesome deeds in Uganda was but the start of its evil acts in neighboring countries of the DRC, CAR and South Sudan where they continue to abduct, attack, maim, kill, innocent civilians and loot their properties.

Since December 2009 to date, the LRA carried out 4,537 abductions and killed 2,796 people. On a positive note, 1,901 people have also returned from the LRA captivity¹ since 2009.

Last year alone, the LRA carried out 519 attacks during which 51 people were killed. 444 people returned from the LRA.

Between January and March 2013, the LRA committed 58 attacks compared to 36 attacks between October and December 2012². These resulted in 69 and 111 abductions respectively. The bulk of these attacks (72%) took place in DRC while 28% took place in CAR. During this period, 37 people who had been with the LRA for six months or more defected from the rebel group.

Together we are one

Madam Speaker, injustice anywhere, is a threat to justice everywhere. We can't sit idly by in 'our comfort zones' and not be concerned about what happens in our neighbourhoods. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

That's why Invisible Children continues to engage LRA affected communities in DRC and CAR as a sign of solidarity. We are cognisant of the interrelatedness of communities and states.

We are also mindful of the fact that northern Uganda can't be said to be in a post conflict LRA situation when cruel and inhuman acts by Joseph Kony and his henchmen persist in our neighbourhoods. Madam speaker, we are experiencing tentative peace.

¹ <http://lra-crisistracker.theresolve.org/>

² LRA Crisis Tracker, January- March 2013, Quarterly Security Brief





Regional Office-Kampala:

Address: Plot 24 Bazarabusa Rise, Bugolobi P.O Box 37041 Kampala, Uganda.

Phone: +256 752300720/ +256 471 432583

The LRA remains a strong security threat to the region.

As of May 2013, there were approximately 600 combatants and dependants in LRA. Of these, approximately 250 are combatants including up to 200 Ugandans and 50 low-ranking fighters abducted primarily from ethnic Zande communities in CAR, Congo and South Sudan.³

Madam Speaker, reports⁴ indicate that between October 2009 up to around March 2013, Joseph Kony and his senior commanders took shelter/ safe haven at Kafia Kingi enclave that lies between the border between Sudan and South Sudan and shares its border with CAR.

Recent defector reports⁵ indicate that Kony may have returned to Kafia Kingi since then after a short stint in parts of DRC and CAR.

Kony and LRA have lately tried with limited success to reach out to former backers in the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF.) However, the SAF has so far refused to provide the LRA with substantial military support.

Faced with a serious affront to its operations by the UPDF and the US military advisors sanctioned by President Obama, the LRA is now using elephant poaching in Garamba National park as a means to sustain itself. LRA leader Joseph Kony ordered his fighters to bring him elephant tusks, which he trades for the much-needed resources like food, weapons ammunition and other supplies⁶.

Madam Speaker, trade in elephant tusks gives the LRA a new lease of life as it supports continuing atrocities LRA's in the region. This threatens to reverse gains made in bringing an end to this conflict.

Madam Speaker, cognisant of the important role EALA can play in ensuring regional stability, convinced about your commitment to sustainable peace and development in the region, now therefore, on behalf of the people affected by the LRA activities, we make these requests to you with a view of ending the long term consequences of the LRA and end the LRA scourge.

³ Loosening Kony's Grip; *Effective Defection Strategies for Today's LRA*, July 2013, *The Resolve*.

⁴ Hidden in Plain Sight: Sudan's harbouring of the LRA in the Kafia Kingi Enclave, 2009- 2013

⁵ Loosening Kony's Grip; *Effective Defection Strategies for Today's LRA*, July 2013, *The Resolve*.

⁶ Kony's Ivory: How Elephant Poaching in Congo Helps Support the Lord's Resistance Army, June 2013

Sybilly.

- EALA should send a fact finding mission to the LRA affected communities in northern Uganda, DRC and CAR to see how the victims are rebuilding their lives and bear witness to cruel atrocities being committed by the LRA, humanitarian interventions and the efforts to encourage LRA defections.
- To urge regional governments to send troops to support anti-LRA operations in the region akin to joint operations against militant groups like the Al-Shaabab
- Lobby governments in DRC, Sudan and South Sudan to allow for counter LRA operations in their countries
- Ask EALA's Regional Affairs and Conflict Resolution Committee to critically study and examine the LRA conflict, its survival strategies and what needs to be done to permanently end it and make recommendations to EALA.
- Ask the Ugandan government to support defection of LRA combatants, rehabilitation programs for LRA returnees, remain committed to provision of amnesty to LRA returnees, and support meaningful recovery programs in northern Uganda, institute enduring National Reconciliation and sustainable Peace mechanism and fast Track the National Transitional Justice policy in support of sustainable peace.
- Urge EAC member states and regional governments to act in defense of wildlife, biodiversity, flora and fauna, which are now under increased pressure and threat by the rebel groups like the LRA and other security actors.

Madam Speaker, we are available wherever called upon to elucidate on issues presented in this petition.

We have also attached copies of reports that give detailed accounts of all the issues presented in this petition as annexures to this report. These reports are also available electronically.



Regional Office-Kampala:

Address: Plot 24 Bazarabusa Rise, Bugolobi P.O Box 37041 Kampala, Uganda.

Phone: +256 752300720/ +256 471 432583

With the highest regards, I remain.

Yours Sincerely,



Jolly Grace A. Okot

REGIONAL AMBASSADOR

For and on behalf of Invisible Children