

## The Lord's Resistance Army<sup>1</sup>

---

In December 2006, the outgoing UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Joaquim Chissano – former President of Mozambique – as his Special Envoy for the LRA-Affected Areas. The Lord's Resistance Army, formed in the late 1980s, is a militia with an appalling record on human rights abuses, initially in northern Uganda. In 2006-7, it seemed possible that the Government of South Sudan might be able to broker a peace agreement between Uganda and the LRA, and Chissano co-chaired talks in Juba, Sudan.

The talks were unsteady from the beginning – although Chissano is credited with having played an important roll in ensuring that they did not break down very early. Nonetheless, the situation in northern Uganda did improve somewhat through 2007. This was in part because the LRA used the lull of the talks to relocate to north-east DRC. In mid-2008, however, the talks foundered on the fears of the LRA's leader Joseph Kony that he could be sent before the International Criminal Court, which had issued his arrest warrant in 2005.

In November 2008, Chissano and his south Sudanese counterpart issued an ultimatum calling for Kony to return to negotiations by the end of the month. Kony did not comply, and Ugandan forces launched a large-scale military offensive against the LRA in the north-east DRC. This mission had Congolese permission, and the LRA went into retreat. Though Chissano's mandate was set to run through December 2009, the Secretary-General chose to suspend the Envoy as of June 30, 2009, in response to Kony's lack of cooperation with the process. He indicated that any dramatic shift in LRA policy might alter this choice.

This success was only temporary, however. The LRA continues to operate on Congolese territory, and is an increasingly frightening presence in south-eastern CAR. It also has a growing presence in southern Sudan on the border with the DRC and CAR. The UN estimates that it has driven 25,000 people from their homes in 2010. The LRA thus has the potential to destabilize these three countries, all of which face other internal threats. While the US government has committed to draft a strategy for dealing with the movement, it threatens to be a dangerous factor in the region's politics for years to come.

1 This account of negotiations with the LRA follows Ronald R. Atkinson, "From Uganda to the Congo and Beyond: Pursuing the Lord's Resistance Army," International Peace Institute, 2009.