



## Association of Concerned Africa Scholars

*Engaged analysis for 35 years about U.S. policy affecting Africa*

### **ACAS Statement to the U.S. Government about the Lord's Resistance Army and Central Africa**

*March 14, 2012*

Scholars in the *Association of Concerned Africa Scholars (ACAS)* are encouraged whenever U.S. citizens become knowledgeably involved in debates about important policy regarding Africa. However, after consulting with scholars of Uganda and Central Africa and with other experts in the region, we are deeply concerned that the recent campaign in the United States to pursue and arrest Joseph Kony, leader of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), could have dangerous unintended consequences.

Expanding U.S. military operations with the Ugandan army to capture Kony could increase the militarization of the region and lead to deaths of civilians who are caught in the crossfire or become targets of retaliatory attacks by the LRA, as has occurred in the past. Indeed, the Ugandan army itself has been guilty of atrocities and abuse of civilians. First and foremost, the U.S. government must refrain from actions that could undermine peace and security.

The *Association of Concerned Africa Scholars* calls on President Obama, Secretary Clinton, Assistant Secretary Carson, Ambassador Barrie Walkley (*Special Advisor for the Great Lakes and the Democratic Republic of the Congo*), and relevant members of Congress:

- To cooperate closely with the African Union (AU) and its new *Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Counter-Terrorism Cooperation*, Ambassador Francisco Caetano José Madeira. The U.S. also should provide financial, logistical, and equipment support to the AU as needed in efforts to end the destabilizing activities and atrocities committed against civilians by various militias, including the LRA, and by the national armies in this region.
- To acknowledge that ending the violence and its resulting devastation in Uganda and Central Africa primarily requires negotiations with the goal of creating a favorable environment for beginning to build sustainable and productive economies and to reintegrate members of the various militias into their societies. Aggressive military action and the active involvement of the U.S. military is highly likely to be counter-productive, increasing rather than solving the problems of violence, disorganization, weak governance, and lack of development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Uganda.

- To take a strong stand against the use of child soldiers by fully complying with the U.S. *Child Soldier Prevention Act of 2009* by prohibiting military assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other governments until they meet specific benchmarks, including ending recruitment of child soldiers, demobilizing children from existing forces, and bringing recruiters of child soldiers to justice, as urged by Amnesty International.
- To actively seek an effective United Nations *Arms Trade Treaty* (ATT) to end irresponsible trade in weapons, munitions, and other military and policing equipment that often inflict misery and carnage on people, especially in Africa.
- To provide all possible support, funding, and facilitation to the *UN High Commission for Refugees* (UNHCR) and the *UN Children's Fund* (UNICEF) for their enduring and as yet not fully funded work to meet the needs of former child soldiers, refugees, victims of rape and abuse, and the wider population displaced by the militias, including the LRA, and armies of the Congo, Central African Republic, Sudan, and Uganda.

*For further information –*

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