



Capturing Kony [1]

March 9, 2012

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More than 50 million viewers of the [Kony 2012 viral video](#) [4] now know that Joseph Kony, founder and leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, is a wanted man with the blood of many on his hands. Human Rights Watch has [spent years](#) [5] investigating the horrors perpetrated by the LRA in Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic (CAR), and South Sudan. We've gathered evidence at massacre sites and interviewed hundreds of boys and girls forced to fight for his army or held captive as sex slaves. We've taken our findings to government leaders, [pushing for action](#), [6] and even created [a short video postcard](#) [7] bringing the voices and appeals of victims directly to the Obama administration.

The Lord's Resistance Army began fighting the government of Uganda in the mid-1980s partly as a response to the marginalization of people in the north. It swiftly degenerated into a brutal and merciless armed group, able to replenish its ranks only by abducting, terrorizing and brainwashing children to fight. Its forces, thought to number 150-300 fighters plus hundreds of captive civilians, left Uganda in 2005 and now operate in Congo, South Sudan and the CAR.

Because the LRA moves in remote areas, it is hard to track. Its three most senior leaders, including Kony, are thought to be in the CAR, with smaller groups carrying out attacks in South Sudan and northern Congo. Governments in the region have shown neither the ability nor the resolve to protect civilians from LRA abuses. United Nations peacekeepers are too few in numbers to safeguard civilians much beyond their bases.

Human Rights Watch has long urged a concerted international response to assist regional efforts to arrest Kony and other LRA leaders subject to arrest warrants from the International Criminal Court. Such action requires:

- Increased protection for civilians to prevent retaliatory attacks by the LRA
- A program to rescue children and adults captured by the LRA
- Rehabilitation for LRA fighters and captives who escape
- Enhanced communication and early warning systems so civilians can report attacks and rapid assistance can be deployed
- Better demobilization efforts to help LRA fighters who want to surrender
- Deployment of capable forces with adequate logistical and intelligence support to apprehend the LRA's leaders

The [US has sent 100 US Special Forces](#) [6] personnel as military advisers and is supporting efforts to transform the operation into an African Union-backed regional effort. Other countries – such as France and the UK – could also be doing more. The UN should be redeploying peacekeepers to the areas where communities are most vulnerable to LRA attacks. The US government has committed to building a cellphone network in those areas but implementation has been slow.

In November, local groups [wrote to the presidents](#) [8] of Congo and CAR asking for more help. "Civilians in this remote region have

no protection from LRA attacks, and often no means of communicating with others to call for help,” they wrote. “We can only truly rejoice when the LRA threat is over and when we hear that Joseph Kony is no longer terrorizing our region. We have suffered too much and we are tired of living in total insecurity – afraid to go to our fields to farm and unsure when or where the rebels may surface again. We don’t know whether our children who were abducted by the LRA will ever come back home.”

Arresting Kony and other LRA leaders would reaffirm that those who commit mass atrocities will face justice, and it would end the scourge of one of Africa’s most brutal groups.

Source URL: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/03/09/capturing-kony>

Links:

[1] <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/03/09/capturing-kony>

[2] <http://twitter.com/share?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hrw.org%2Fnews%2F2012%2F03%2F09%2Fcapturing-kony&count=horizontal&via=&text=Capturing%20Kony&counturl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hrw.org%2Fnews%2F2012%2F03%2F09%2Fcapturing-kony>

[3] http://www.facebook.com/plugins/like.php?href=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hrw.org%2Fnews%2F2012%2F03%2F09%2Fcapturing-kony&layout=button_count&show_faces=false&action=recommend&colorscheme=light&width=100&height=21&font=&locale=

[4] <http://youtu.be/Y4MnpzG5Sqc>

[5] <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1997/09/18/scars-death>

[6] <http://www.hrw.org/news/2010/07/28/ending-rebel-violence-central-africa>

[7] <file:///C:/Users/braunsa/AppData/seuline/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/Temporary%20Internet%20Files/Content.Outlook/PGMTBTL9/%3Ca%20href=Ã¢â¬âÃ¢â¬%20http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/05/24/us-act-end-lord-s-resistance-army-violence-central-africa>

[8] <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/11/11/letter-drc-president-joseph-kabila-civil-society-representatives-lra-affected-areas>

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