



Peace over Justice: The Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) vs. the International Criminal Court (ICC) in Northern Uganda

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Introduction

In July 2006, peace talks between the rebel group of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the government of Uganda opened in the Southern Sudan town of Juba. Since the start of the armed rebellion of the LRA in 1987, these talks presented the most important opportunity to end this armed confrontation in northern Uganda. The LRA rebellion is a continuation of the various rebellions mounted by people in northern Uganda to challenge the capture of power by President Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Army (NRA) in 1986. Between 1988 and 2008, peace talks were held between the government and various rebel groups in northern, eastern, central, west Nile, as well as western regions of Uganda to end the insurgencies. Whilst some of the armed rebellions were ended successfully with the signing of peace agreements,¹ the LRA rebellion has persisted.

This essay discusses the interface between civil society activities and opinions in ending the violent conflict in northern Uganda, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) investigation of the Uganda situation. Civil society, whilst

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acknowledging the importance of the ICC, has at the same time argued that the Court's pursuit of prosecutorial justice in northern Uganda should take a back seat until positive peace has been achieved. Also, civil society representatives have argued that what northern Uganda needs is restorative rather than retributive justice. Even when the LRA leaders failed to sign the peace agreement in 2008, civil society groups have continued to argue that peace should be achieved before justice by the ICC (or any other institution) is instituted.

In December 2003, the government of Uganda and the ICC concluded an agreement for the latter to open an investigation into the situation in northern Uganda with a view to indicting those LRA elements who had perpetrated egregious crimes during the armed rebellion since 1987. In October 2005, the ICC issued arrest warrants for five LRA commanders including its leader, Joseph Kony. Kony and his commanders were charged with various counts of crimes against humanity, including *inter alia* sexual enslavement, rape, and murder; and war crimes including *inter alia* enlisting children, pillaging, and murder (Apuli 2006). When peace talks opened in Juba in 2006, the warrants became a sticking point impeding the conclusion of the final peace agreement, with the LRA representatives arguing that the group would not conclude a peace agreement when the warrants were 'hanging around the necks' of their commanders. In response, the government of Uganda argued that it would ask the ICC to withdraw them after the conclusion of the agreement.

Meanwhile, throughout the duration of the conflict, civil society groups² in northern Uganda, particularly the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI), argued for the peaceful conclusion of the conflict. In fact, on a number of occasions, the group led peace missions to talk to the rebels with a view of persuading them to lay down their arms peacefully. Thus when the ICC entered the fray, the ARLPI argued that the Court would complicate the situation. Whilst recognising the role of the ICC, the ARLPI argued that the institution should take a step back until peace was first realised. The group advanced a number of arguments against the ICC investigation including: that the institution's intervention was one-sided, as it ignored the crimes perpetrated by government forces; that the involvement jeopardised peace negotiations, which had been held on and off since the beginning of early 1990s; that the intervention interfered with the Amnesty Act of 2000; and that the intervention went against the traditional Acholi methods of conflict resolution. Thus, the argument of the group was that peace should come before justice.

The LRA and the Conflict in Northern Uganda

As Museveni's NRA was seizing power in Kampala in January 1986, the bulk of the national army, the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA), predominantly made up of people from Lango and Acholi districts, retreated northwards. In December 1980, parliamentary elections were held in Uganda. The Uganda People's Congress (UPC) political party led by Apollo Milton Obote won the elections, although they were later accused by other participating parties of having rigged the poll. Museveni, the leader of the Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM)

party, declared that he was going to fight the ‘illegitimate’ government of Obote and soon after declared war, along with his supporters, against the Obote government, which had been established after the disputed poll. In July 1985, partly due to the unending NRA insurgency, the UNLA overthrew the government of Obote. The new government, led by General Tito Okello, invited the NRA to take part in peace talks, held in Nairobi, Kenya and mediated by President Moi, which ultimately resulted in an agreement between the NRA and the Okello government in December 1985. However, this agreement was never implemented, and the NRA retaliated by marching to Kampala and capturing power. When the NRA reached northern Uganda, the defeated UNLA attempted to stage a comeback. As early as August 1986, elements of the defeated UNLA started organising to fight the Museveni government. Between 1988 and 1990, the NRA had been able to militarily defeat the following rebel groups *inter alia*: the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) I and II, and the Uganda Peoples’ Army (UPA). However, from the ashes of the HSM I and II rose the LRA.

The LRA was started by Kony after the defeat of Alice Lakwena’s HSM II in 1988. Kony is a nephew of Lakwena, who herself is a daughter of Severino Lukoya, once the leader of the HSM I. Kony proclaimed himself a messianic prophet, and stated that he aimed to overthrow the Museveni government and rule Uganda according to the biblical Ten Commandments. From the start, Kony’s programme was ‘a mixture of political entrepreneurship, personal frustration and war-lordism’ (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999:22). The LRA found a fertile ground to operate from Southern Sudan because the area had been wracked by civil war since May 1983 when the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) started fighting the Khartoum government. The Sudanese government allied with the LRA, as the government of Uganda openly supported the SPLA. Tripp (2010:158) has observed that on 29 March 1989, a secret military cooperation agreement was signed between Uganda and Colonel John Garang’s SPLA. The agreement committed Uganda to provide equipment and training to the SPLA as well as passports for travel abroad. Uganda also provided the SPLA with free passage through Uganda in conducting its operations. In turn, the Sudanese government was instrumental in ‘transforming [the] rag-tag group of rebels [of the LRA] into a coherent, well supplied military force, largely through training, sharing of logistics and the introduction of more powerful and sophisticated weaponry such as land mines and rocket propelled grenades’ (Dunn 2010:49). Thus the Khartoum government provided the LRA with the much-needed military bases and supply of weapons for it to continue destabilising Uganda and fighting the SPLA.

The LRA has become notorious in its tactic of wantonly and systematically abducting people, particularly children (Apuuli 2004:400). The abducted boys and girls were forcibly recruited into the LRA ranks, with the girls also being married to LRA members. In addition, the LRA has been accused of using children as human shields, porters, and labourers, and many have been also charged with fighting, killing, and abducting children. According to the Abducted Children Registration and Information Systems database developed and maintained jointly by the United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF) and the Uganda government, the LRA had abducted 26,615 children by 2001 (Akhavan 2005:407).

But what are the actual roots of the LRA rebellion? Whatever approach one takes in regard to the causes of armed conflict in northern Uganda, there is a clear need for a thorough understanding of the structural as well as immediate causes that have given rise to the conflict and have contributed to its escalation (Michailof, Kostner, and Devictor 2002:3). Structurally, the conflict is explained as originating from the North–South divide and the notorious policies of divide-and-rule initiated and applied with impunity by many colonial and post-colonial regimes. To manage the diverse nationalities and ethnic groups within Uganda, such regimes instituted particular mechanisms to encourage members of different groups to view each other as manifestly distinct and, at times, as enemies (Makerere University Human Rights and Peace Centre n.d.:6). In this respect, colonial anthropology made a significant contribution to the construction of such social and ethnic stereotypes in Uganda. For example, John Hanning Speke, an officer of the British Indian Army who played a key role in exploration expeditions in Africa, compared the Acholi people with members of the Buganda people by noting that ‘the former had no Sultans or Kings of any consequence and therefore were savages’ (Finnström 2003:9–12). In the same vein, the colonial administrators portrayed the Acholi as a people preoccupied with war and, therefore, warmongers. The cultural branding continued even well after Uganda obtained its independence. For example, the former Army Commander of the UPDF, Major General James Kazini, has remarked: ‘If anything, it is the local Acholi soldiers causing the problems It’s the cultural background of these people here: they are violent. It is genetic’ (ibid.:33).

The North–South divide is also explained in terms of the economic imbalance that was perpetrated initially by the British colonial administrators and later on by the successive post-independent Ugandan governments. In this regard, the North was viewed chiefly as a reservoir of labour to be recruited for the uniformed services. According to Gersony (1997:6), ‘During the Colonial period, the British Government recruited heavily among the Acholi for the uniformed services (army, police and prison guards)’. Lwanga-Luyiingo (1989:30) has noted in this regard that ‘so powerful was the belief that the northerners believed themselves to be the only ones divinely ordained to bear arms in Uganda, while the rest [of the people] believed themselves incapable of bearing them’.

At the same time, the British deliberately reserved the introduction of industry and cash crops to the South, for which the North became a reservoir of cheap (manual) labour (International Crisis Group 2004), thereby dividing the country into ‘productive’ and ‘non-productive’ zones. This colonial economic policy of ‘zoning’ helped bring about a polarisation amongst Ugandans that, according to Lwanga-Luyiingo (1989:36), remains in place even today. The issue of the marginalisation of the North is further brought out by the former Minister of State for Security, Grace Akello, who has been reported to have lamented the following in a radio talk show on Radio Mega in Gulu:

There are some of the basic causes of this conflict we have here. The marginalisation the colonial government meted out at northern Uganda, whereby our people missed out on many educational opportunities, and we

were considered ill-trained to participate in the colonial administrative machinery. So we are the ones supposed to provide labour, we were not supposed to provide our brains, and we were supposed to provide muscles to Uganda. (Makerere University Human Rights and Peace Centre n.d.:9)

In addition to the ongoing divisions that resulted from colonial and post-colonial governance policies, other underlying causes of the conflict include a sense of military humiliation that the Acholis endured at the hands of the NRA; loss of government power, which resulted in the loss of a source of livelihood for the Acholis; fear of persecution/vengeance at the hands of the NRA; and poverty (Gersony 1997:17–18; Makerere University Human Rights and Peace Centre n.d.:6–17).

Two factors triggered the conflict. First, Heike Behrend (1991:165) has cited that an initial cause of the conflict can be explained by the behaviour of NRA soldiers who, upon arriving in the district of Gulu, ‘took the opportunity to loot, rape and murder. To escape this, some of the Acholi ex-soldiers took up their weapons again and went into the bush to join the newly founded UPDA’. Second, the conflict can be traced to the fear of revenge, which emanated from the legacy of stereotyping the Nilotic communities of Uganda. The NRA war had drawn heavily on these stereotypes by depicting its war against the Obote government as that against murderers, ‘*Anyanyas*’,³ and a primitive and politically bankrupt people. According to Makerere University Human Rights and Peace Centre (n.d.:15), ‘these hate speeches [and depictions] rendered violence inevitable’.

As early as October 1986, there were sustained efforts to negotiate an end to the violence. On that occasion, a civil society ‘goodwill peace mission’ was sent to meet leaders of the Uganda People’s Democratic Movement/Army (UPDM/A)⁴ in the bush after receiving President Museveni’s endorsement (Lamwaka 2002). The five-member ‘goodwill team’, led by an Acholi elder Tiberio Atwoma Okeny, embarked upon a 145-day trip through Kitgum district up to Juba in Southern Sudan and, upon returning, prepared a report for the President and the NRA recommending an amnesty for the fighters (ibid.). Although the government agreed to this position, when the LRA insurgency broke out, the government position was to deal with it through military means. According to President Museveni, ‘[to] fight and annihilate these types of elements [was] a justified cause’ (Omach 2010:295). Also he commonly referred to the LRA as ‘a nuisance’ composed of ‘bandits’, thus justifying dealing with it through military means (Tripp 2010:171). In contrast, elements of civil society strongly advocated for a peaceful rather than a military solution to the insurgency, as I shall describe in the following section.

Civil Society and Conflict Resolution

During colonialism, civil society in Africa was marginalised and conscripted into the state machinery to contain the African majority, which was completely excluded from any institutional role in government (Katusiimeh 2004:104). In Uganda, for example, as the country moved towards independence, the institutions of civil society were weakened to the point whereby political parties battled rather

than advancing the common cause of democratic participation. By the time Uganda gained its independence from the British, most civil society organisations (CSOs) had either been incorporated into the state machinery or had been severely restricted in their operations. Nevertheless, with the coming to power of President Museveni, and his commitment to democratic governance based on accountability, the number of civil society groups mushroomed. CSOs brought together activists around common issues such as health care, education, children's welfare, the promotion of human rights and democracy, as well as conflict prevention, management, and resolution.

The end of the Cold War witnessed an increase in intra-state conflicts, which, correspondingly, resulted in an increased engagement by CSOs in the area of conflict prevention, management, and resolution (CPMR). In the context of Africa, Shaw has argued that this was largely due to a 'regime vacuum', whereby national governments have become increasingly less effective in peace-building and peace-keeping (cited in UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa 2004:3). Consequently, African civil society has taken on the role of addressing violent conflict, and international development donors and agencies have increasingly turned toward CSOs, who are viewed as key facilitators of more grassroots approaches to conflict prevention and resolution, for peace-building (UN Office of the Special Advisor on Africa 2010:4).

The importance of CSOs in CPMR was underscored by the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict in 1997 when it noted that '[n]ongovernmental organizations, an institutional expression of civil society, are important to the political health of virtually all countries, and their current and potential contributions to the prevention of deadly conflict, especially mass violence within states, is rapidly becoming one of the hallmarks of the post-Cold War era' (Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict 1997:111). Intra-state conflicts undermine the states in which they occur, and conventional international strategies and mechanisms used to resolve them such as diplomatic efforts for mediation and reconciliation have often proven to be ineffective.

In the case of northern Uganda, the overwhelming view of civil society has been that the conflict should be brought to an end through peaceful means, namely through dialogue (Apuuli 2004:406–07; Tindifa 2006:37). In this regard, CSOs have been a constant irritant to those who think the military solution or even the intervention of the ICC should be the only response(s) to end the conflict. At every opportunity, they have called on the government to engage in talks with the LRA, sometimes at the price of being called 'Kony apologists', 'rebel collaborators', or 'sympathisers' by the government (Otim 2009). Nevertheless, this charge has not distracted their focus on dialogue.

The Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) represents one of the most vocal civil society groups in opposing either a military means to ending the conflict or intervention by the ICC. The ARPLI first emerged as an inter-faith initiative, which came together at the height of the conflict between 1995 and 1997 to address deteriorating relations between civilians and the military in Acholiland, as well as those between the Acholi elected leaders and the central government (Khadiagala 2001:3). In 1998, the initiative was formally renamed as the Acholi

Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI), headed by a five-member standing taskforce composed of local religious leaders to oversee its functions. The main objective of the ARLPI is to contribute to the process of establishing peace and stability in Acholiland through effective mediation, consensus building, participatory involvement of all the parties, and cessation of hostilities (ibid.:4). Its intervention in the conflict embraced community activities that ranged from lobbying for amnesty for the rebels, educating the population about peace, and providing an alternative forum for the articulation of local grievances.⁵ During the early years of the war, the religious leaders had focused on providing moral and practical support to their parishioners in the conflict zone. Church institutions became centres of support for thousands seeking shelter from violence, and over time, a greater consensus emerged amongst church leaders on the need to be proactive in bearing witness to the conflict and engaging directly in peace-building. The focus of the group later shifted to advocating for reconciliation between the local communities and the rebels, specifically drawing upon traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.

ARLPI's Arguments against the ICC

Partly as a result of the work of the ARLPI, the government of Uganda passed the Amnesty Act (2000), which grants amnesty from prosecution to all former rebels who voluntarily return home. It should be recalled, as Finnegan (2010:431) has observed, 'Following the failure of the 1994 peace talks, many civilians in northern Uganda mobilized in a grassroots fashion, vehemently calling for a peaceful resolution to the war and an "enactment of a comprehensive amnesty"'. In fact, the ARLPI regarded the passage of the Amnesty Act as its major contribution to peace-making in northern Uganda. This initiative, originating from within the region itself and spearheaded by local religious and cultural leaders, represented a clear rejection of the failure of a military approach in ending the war. Therefore, to the ARLPI, the ICC intervention complicates the amnesty process, especially with respect to Kony and his top commanders.

The principle of amnesty for the rank and file fighters won support among northern communities principally because the majority of the LRA combatants were forced to join against their will, many of whom, particularly children, had been abducted. It is estimated that as of April 2006, the LRA had abducted 24,000 to 38,000 children; and 28,000 to 37,000 adults (Pham et al. 2007:15). According to the ARLPI, therefore, many of the LRA combatants are people who had been forced to take part in the conflict against their will and thus should not be penalised. Rather than branded as war criminals through the intervention of the ICC, these former combatants should be granted amnesty.

Additionally, and following from the above point, the ARLPI opposed the ICC's prosecution of members of the LRA by arguing that this will vitiate all attempts to end the conflict peacefully. As an advocate of the amnesty, Bishop McLeod Ochola, Vice-Chairman of the ARLPI, observed that '[the ICC probe] [would] . . . destroy all efforts for peace. People want this war to stop. If we follow the ICC in branding the LRA criminals, it won't stop' (Apuuli 2006:184). Ochola

further averred that ‘the ICC probe must come after the war has ended’ (Apuuli 2004:407). Elsewhere, another leading figure in the ARLPI, Archbishop John Baptist Odama of Gulu, observed that ‘[the ICC indictment] directly work[ed] against efforts to end [the] war peacefully’ (Apuuli 2006:185).

The ARLPI also opposed the ICC investigations because they were only aimed at the LRA activities and not the crimes that were allegedly committed by government forces. The issue of selective investigation by the ICC has been a source of concern in northern Uganda. For Archbishop Odama, the ICC investigation must probe both sides of the conflict.⁶ Just before the ICC Chief Prosecutor unsealed the arrest warrants against the LRA, Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report that documented numerous instances in which the UPDF was allegedly responsible for committing rapes, torture, killings, arbitrary arrests, and detentions of the civilian population in northern Uganda (Human Rights Watch 2005). HRW called on the government to carry out investigations into these abuses, but the government dismissed the report’s findings.

After analysing the gravity of all crimes in northern Uganda committed by the LRA and Ugandan forces, the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, remarked that the ‘[c]rimes committed by the LRA were [found to be] much more numerous and of much higher gravity than alleged crimes committed by the UPDF’ (International Criminal Court 2005b:3). However, this view has been contested by the ARLPI, among others, which has accused him of bias. Moreover, the ARLPI has pointed out that the Chief Prosecutor manifested his partiality when he addressed a joint press conference with President Museveni when the investigation into the situation in northern Uganda was announced. While it is difficult to draw definite conclusions regarding the potential bias of the Chief Prosecutor, Danner (2003:537) has observed that ‘[i]mpartiality is critical in the context of the ICC because its absence constitutes the basis for the charge most frequently leveled at the Court: that it will become a source of “politicized” prosecutions’. The Court’s neutrality has also been questioned due to its investigators in northern Uganda being accompanied by Uganda army personnel while seeking witnesses (Branch 2007:188).

The ARLPI has been at the forefront of making a case to use Acholi (in particular) and traditional methods (in general) of conflict resolution to end the LRA rebellion. These methods are peaceful and restorative in nature. In this respect, the group has invoked the compatibility of Acholi traditional beliefs with biblical injunctions on forgiveness and reconciliation (Khadiagala 2001:12).⁷ The main argument of the ARLPI is that the ICC’s form of justice, which is retributive in nature, is in contradiction with the traditional Acholi practices, which emphasise reconciliation as a means of resolving conflict (Branch 2007:191). Traditionally, civil society groups have argued that Acholi people found justice after periods of violence not by punishing the perpetrators, but by forgiving them via the means of certain rituals and ceremonies, in particular through the practice of *mato oput*,⁸ presided over by elders and chiefs (ibid.:192). As such, the ICC intervention is seen as precluding the possibility of community reconciliation by spiriting away key perpetrators, those who most need to be reconciled or dealt with by the community.

According to the ARLPI, the pursuit of forgiveness focuses on the future rather than on the painful past, which the ICC seeks to highlight through retributive punishment. Because the population has not felt that there have been any tangible results from other methods that have been employed to end the conflict (including criminal prosecutions by the ICC), according to Finnegan (2010:436), a ‘strong sense of war fatigue . . . has emerged after so many years of violence, which has created space for Acholi to choose forgiveness’. Forgiveness, rather than military confrontation and criminal prosecution, offers the people of Uganda an opportunity to maintain control of rebuilding their communities to reinstate peace in the country. Civil Society Organizations for Peace in Northern Uganda (CSOPNU) buttressed the need for promoting forgiveness and reconciliation by offering the following statement:

... ancient Acholi rituals . . . have the support and confidence of the majority of Acholis . . . shouldn’t communities be allowed to handle the conflicts in their own manner, especially if their manner is most likely to bring peace to the affected community? (Quoted in Finnegan 2010:440)

The ARLPI, moreover, views the issue of forgiveness and reconciliation for the LRA as a perfectly legitimate means to promote reconciliation, as it is the Acholi elders who blessed Kony to commence the rebellion in the first place. Kony himself has posited that ‘it is the elders who flagged off the rebellion in the north’ (Tindifa 2006:35), and, as such, there is an agreement that it would be wrong to turn around and prosecute the very people who had been originally encouraged to take up arms in the conflict.

Lastly, the ARLPI group remains at the forefront in calling on the two parties in the conflict to end the rebellion through peaceful means. In fact, civil society involvement in the peace process in northern Uganda can be traced back to the first time that then Minister for the Pacification of the North, Betty Oyella Bigombe, first engaged the LRA in peace talks. When these talks failed, civil society groups began a sustained campaign to encourage a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The resistance by many CSOs around the involvement of the ICC is due to the fact that it is widely viewed as an attempt to undermine the ongoing efforts by such organisations to resolve the conflict.

Whilst the ICC has acknowledged the concerns of the ARLPI by way of applauding the positive role that traditional justice can play in ending the conflict, it has at the same time maintained that the LRA leadership must be prosecuted under international justice laws. Because the ARLPI advocates for a blanket amnesty (including for the indicted LRA leaders) on the premise of forgiveness and healing, the ICC has ignored the group’s demand to withdraw. Of course, blanket amnesty for crimes such as those with which the LRA is charged is contrary to the purpose of the ICC (Robinson 2003:3). The Court, however, has engaged Ugandan civil society to chart the means for moving forward. In this regard, the Court has not rebuffed the lobbying by civic, religious, traditional, and local leaders in northern Uganda with respect to not prosecuting the LRA. Just before the Court issued the arrest warrants for the LRA leadership, the Chief Prosecutor received a delegation of Acholi leaders at The Hague and listened to

their arguments urging him not to issue indictments (International Criminal Court 2005c). In addition, the Court has been doing outreach work in Uganda sensitising the population about its work, especially leaders from the areas most affected by the conflict (see International Criminal Court 2005a). All this has raised hopes that the ICC and civil society will finally reach a common *modus operandi* on how to effectively end the conflict in northern Uganda.

Conclusion

Civil society and the ARLPI, in particular, have consistently argued that the conflict in northern Uganda can only be ended through dialogue, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The government, on the other hand, has argued for a military solution, and when this failed, it invited the ICC to commence an investigation ‘in the situation concerning the LRA in Northern and Western Uganda’ (Apuuli 2008:802). The ICC involvement in northern Uganda elicited opposition from civil society groups.

The ICC has been indifferent to calls for a blanket amnesty made by the ARLPI. The Court has continued to insist that the indicted LRA leaders must be prosecuted in line with contemporary international legal norms. In this regard, the Chief Prosecutor has argued that ‘[t]he best way to finally stop the conflict . . . is to arrest the top leaders’ (quoted in International Crisis Group 2006:16). Nevertheless, this debate has been rendered moot by the failure of the LRA to sign the final peace agreement after the Juba Talks.⁹ It is unlikely that the indicted LRA leaders will come out of hiding soon and, moreover, the ICC does not have the capacity to arrest them. The launching of ‘Operation Lightning Thunder’ in December 2008 by the armies of Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and the SPLA against LRA bases in Garamba National Park in the DRC seem to have driven the LRA further underground. Kony, the leader of the LRA, remains underground and there is little prospect that he will either come out of hiding to sign the final peace agreement reached at Juba or that he will be tracked down, arrested, and transferred to the ICC. Given such factors, efforts by both civil society and the ICC remain frozen.

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Notes

¹ For example, the rebels of the Uganda Peoples Democratic Army (UPDA) signed a peace agreement with the government in 1988 (the text of the agreement is available at: <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/northern-uganda/pece-agreement.php> [accessed 5 September 2010]); and the rebellion by the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) II in West Nile

ended peacefully in 2002 when the group signed a peace agreement with the government (the text of the agreement is available at: http://www.beyondjuba.org/peace_agreements/Peace_Agreement_btwn_GOU_and_UNRF_II.pdf [accessed 5 September 2010]).

² An umbrella group called Civil Society Organizations for Peace in Northern Uganda (CSOPNU) brings together various civil society organisations working in northern Uganda. This essay restricts itself to a discussion of the ARLPI (which is a member of CSOPNU) because of its strong stance on the ICC involvement in the northern Uganda conflict.

³ This was a derisory term used by the triumphant NRA and generally people in Buganda to describe the people hailing from northern Uganda or identified with the atrocities of the defeated regime.

⁴ UPDM/A was the first armed group to oppose the Museveni government. Its leadership was mainly drawn from former UNLA soldiers from Gulu and Kitgum. It launched its first attacks on the NRA in August 1986. In June 1988 a section of it reached a peace agreement with the government.

⁵ The group's activities were funded mainly by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

⁶ Archbishop Odama has argued that both Kony, the LRA leader, and the UPDF have committed crimes, therefore the ICC should investigate both sides. However, President Museveni sees in Odama's view the argument that because both sides committed crimes, the government should not have invoked the ICC probe, which is a view rejected by the President.

⁷ Church priests under ARLPI regularly participate in traditional ceremonies like *mato oput*, arguing that reconciliation is achieved through the intertwining of Christian reconciliation ceremonies together with that of Acholi tradition.

⁸ It means 'drinking bitter roots'. *Mato* is to drink and *oput* is a local tree that has bitter roots. The drinking symbolises the quenching of anger.

⁹ The Juba Peace Talks between the LRA and the Government of Uganda begun in July 2006 under the chairmanship of Riek Machar, the Vice President of the Government of Southern Sudan. The two sides concluded five agreements between August 2006 and February 2008, namely: Cessation of Hostilities Agreement; Agreement on Comprehensive Solutions to the Conflict, including special attention to the economic recovery of the north, position of northerners in the government, and a fund to pay reparations to conflict victims; Agreement on Accountability and Reconciliation, including mechanisms for the creation of a Special Division of the High Court to try the most serious crimes and promotion of truth telling and traditional justice mechanisms; Agreement on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) Principles for processing and resettling former combatants in Uganda; and Agreement on the Implementation and Monitoring Mechanisms, requiring the government, after the Final Peace Agreement (FPA) has been signed and during a transitional period in which the LRA is to assemble fully, to ask the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution deferring all investigations and prosecutions of the LRA leaders by the ICC for up to a year.

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