
PRESS RELEASE

Northern Uganda: European Union leadership needed as peace talks remain fragile

BRUSSELS, 5 October 2006 – As peace efforts for northern Uganda hang in the balance the European Parliament today takes an important step in debating actions it can take to support an end to 20 brutal years of conflict.

The hearing in the Parliament is being held in conjunction with the launch of a newly updated edition of *Only Peace Can Restore the Confidence of the Displaced*, a report produced by the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Ugandan based Refugee Law Project.

“While recognising the efforts already taken, the EU must take leadership to address the conflict in northern Uganda. Twenty years of conflict have wreaked devastation to millions caught up on this terrible war” says Luisa Morgantini, Chairwoman of the Development Committee. She is speaking at the hearing taking place today in the European Parliament.

Efforts underway to end this conflict have hit a stumbling block in recent days with rumours of both the Government of Uganda and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) mobilising their forces. Such movements threaten break through talks which have been underway since June this year. Aid agencies have reported improvements in security on ground, which have gone some way to mitigating the appalling humanitarian conditions. Almost two million people have been internally displaced since the war started.

“Communities have for the first time in years been able to access their farms and begin to think about going home. Peace talks offer a real opportunity for hope. People we work with have already begun to have their confidence in a future without fear” says Tomas C. Archer, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council. *“Aggressive military moves by both sides threaten to undermine the good work done so far. The European Parliament must urge all parties to show determination and commitment to end this war. A return to conflict could destabilise the whole region. A negotiated solution to this conflict must be the only solution “*

The report includes updated information on the current humanitarian and political situation in northern Uganda. The impact of attention from the UN Security Council is analysed and a critique is presented of the Ugandan Government’s new emergency mechanisms to respond to the appalling levels of death and disease that have characterised this long running conflict.

“In recent months the Ugandan Government has gone some way to address the appalling humanitarian situation in northern Uganda, but we still have a long way to go,” say Moses Chrispus Okello, Research Officer at the Refugee Law Project. *“While the government’s new six month emergency plan looks good on paper there is little ownership for the actions outlined. In addition the plan was developed with limited consultation with affected communities. Half way through its short life the plan has produced few, if any real changes on the ground’.*

The Norwegian Refugee Council and the Refugee Law Project are calling on the European Parliament to take action, stressing the need to update EU conclusions passed earlier this year and to publicly urge both the LRA and the Ugandan government to continue to work towards a comprehensive peace agreement. Through their links with African parliamentarians, MEPs are encouraged to pledge their support to a peaceful solution promoting appropriate justice mechanisms and national reconciliation processes aimed at addressing the underlying causes of the conflict.

The updated edition of *Only Peace Can Restore the Confidence of the Displaced* can be downloaded at www.internal-displacement.org/publications/ugandareport.

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