



Refugee Law Project



Press Release

Only Peace Can Restore the Confidence of the Displaced

KAMPALA, 17 MARCH 2006 – To improve the humanitarian conditions for roughly two million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in northern Uganda, the Ugandan government must demonstrate a genuine commitment to resolving the conflict through peaceful means, the Refugee Law Project (RLP) said in a new report released today.

The report, *Only Peace Can Restore the Confidence of the Displaced*, was produced in conjunction with the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). The report assesses the implementation of the recommendations made by Francis M. Deng, former Representative of the UN Secretary-General on IDPs, following his visit to Uganda in August 2003. The report covers six broad thematic areas, namely Resolving the Conflict, the National IDP Policy, IDP Protection, Humanitarian Access, Livelihoods, and Return, which reveal that while the government and the international community have made some progress assisting IDPs, the overall response remains sporadic and insufficient. While the National IDP Policy provides a constructive framework to address the humanitarian crisis, its implementation has proven to be an enormous challenge and has had little impact on the situation.

“The government has yet to provide the political will or the resources to fully implement the Policy, and as a result the progressive goals of improving the response to IDPs have been undermined,” said Zachary Lomo, Director of the RLP. “Without any corresponding government plan to genuinely resolve the conflict or LRA commitment to end its insurgency, the IDP Policy is perceived to perpetuate internal displacement,” he added.

The report further demonstrates that continued forced encampment—with resulting limitations on freedom of movement—and the impact of the conflict leave people living in northern Uganda poorly protected. Women and girls are particularly at risk, with chronically high levels of gender based violence reported. “The Ugandan Police and judiciary, two institutions that could potentially provide civilians with the protection they need, are virtually absent in northern Uganda,” said Elisabeth Rasmusson, head of the NRC’s IDMC. “The fact that those who are mandated to provide protection to IDPs, the Ugandan military, are often perpetuating rights abuses against the civilian population is deplorable and clearly indicates the urgent need for re-establishing an effective and functioning judicial system.”

The report offers several recommendations to the Ugandan government, the UN and other humanitarian organisations, and donors and political actors. One of the recommendations requests the government to genuinely commit to facilitating and addressing the delivery of humanitarian aid by declaring northern Uganda a human disaster area. The report also reminds the international community to be aware of potential political motivations behind the government’s recent statements on IDP return and thus recommends that all measures be taken to ensure that any return is absolutely voluntary.

The full report can be downloaded from the Refugee Law Project website:
www.refugeelawproject.org/publications.htm

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