

Daily Telegraph

30 December 2005

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Africa's conflicts

Sir - Mike Pflanz's report ([December 29](#)) on northern Uganda sheds a welcome light on one of Africa's many forgotten conflicts.

For nearly 20 years, the Lord's Resistance Army of Joseph Kony has reigned with an iron fist of terror, forcing the locally resident Acholi people, and especially their children, to fight for a cause as nebulous as their leader himself. Over the course of the conflict, an estimated 20,000 children have been abducted and trained to kill, mutilate and humiliate the people of northern Uganda. Few of these children grow up to see adulthood: ill-equipped and poorly trained, they are used as cannon fodder by Kony and his inner circle to resist the superior military forces of the Ugandan government. As there are plenty of children in supply, Kony remains undefeated.

The conflict in northern Uganda, which was initially supported by the Sudanese government in regional power struggles, once again acquired a wider dimension when the government of Sudan allowed its Ugandan counterpart to pursue fighters of the Lord's Resistance Army into southern Sudan, which itself is only just recovering from three decades of civil war.

Sudan, with at least two civil wars going on at this time, with tensions growing with its neighbour Chad, and affected by the threat of renewed confrontation between Eritrea and Ethiopia, remains in a fragile state.

The wider Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region, in which Uganda and Sudan are both located, is a region in which multiple violent conflicts continue to destabilise a number of countries that have all seen their fair share of violence over the past decades, among them Rwanda, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia.

The international community must realise that these conflicts are all directly or indirectly connected, and that only a broader regional solution will bring lasting peace and stability to this part of Africa. This is by no means an easy task to accomplish, but it is one worth taking on, not least because civilians are the ones who suffer the tremendous costs of these conflicts.

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