



## The Price Of Peace In Uganda

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Across [Sudan](#), northern [Uganda](#) and eastern Congo, many have lived in the shadow of violence for decades. A brutal few are loyal to the darkness.

Two years ago, I visited a squatter's camp of mud houses and open sewers on the outskirts of [Kampala](#), Uganda, where thousands have sought refuge from the [Lord's Resistance Army](#) -- a cultish rebel group that has caused perhaps 100,000 deaths and displaced more than 1.5 million people. A young woman I met had been abducted by the LRA along with other members of her village. She calmly described their first night's "welcoming meal," in which one of the villagers was killed and the rest forced to eat him, to instill a proper fear.

Many of the boys in the settlement had been kidnapped by the LRA and trained as soldiers -- forced, I was told, to do "terrible things" such as murdering neighbors in their home villages so the boys could never return. One of the former child soldiers I met was about 16. When the leader of the LRA, a messianic madman named [Joseph Kony](#), visited his prisoners, all were forced to prostrate themselves -- but this young man looked up in curiosity, and one of his eyes was gouged out.

The man he briefly glimpsed is a cunning thug with a touch of insanity -- a man, in Joseph Conrad's phrase, of "gratified and monstrous passions." Kony takes kidnapped sex slaves for wives, is prone to trances and visions, and claims he can turn bullets into water. His pro-

proven skill is turning children into killers, who intimidate villagers by cutting off lips, ears and noses.

But Kony's forces, under military pressure, have retreated to the remoteness of the Garamba National Park in the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#). Northern Uganda has experienced a year of relative peace, and many displaced villagers are returning to their homes. With African mediation, Uganda and the LRA are engaged in peace talks that have reported incremental progress. Kony has a history of sabotaging talks with unreasonable demands, but there is hope that a cornered LRA might eventually take a deal and lay down its arms.

Some in Congress are calling for the appointment of an American special envoy to push for a final agreement. Such appointments have been useful in other cases. Here, African mediators from [Mozambique](#), southern Sudan and the [African Union](#) want to take the lead -- and they have more urgent needs than getting an envoy.

First, a peace settlement will require resources. Demobilized LRA soldiers will need medical and psychiatric assistance, employment, and education -- a new life to replace old habits of plunder. Ugandan "night-walkers" -- children who avoid capture by trekking to town each evening to sleep in basements and storm sewers -- will need assistance as well. For Congress and the Bush administration to prove their seriousness about a peace agreement

will require more than the pay of a new diplomat.

Second, the military pressure must continue. Garamba Park may sound like a destination for adventure tourism. It is actually a haven for some of the worst killers on Earth -- first the Hutu authors of the Rwandan genocide and now the LRA. LRA forces are planting crops and digging for resources. There are rumors that they may be rearming, with supplies coming by air from [Eritrea](#) or their traditional allies in [Khartoum](#). And the more secure and confident the LRA becomes, the less likely it is to disband.

The [United Nations](#) has more than 18,000 peacekeepers in Congo, with a mandate to oppose destabilizing forces. They should act aggressively to prevent the LRA from putting down roots in Garamba Park. And the United States should support them by sharing intelligence, perhaps providing radar to track suspicious flights into the region and paying what we owe for U.N. peace-keeping.

The final obstacle to a peace treaty is likely to be the treatment of Kony himself, who fears the justice he deserves. Kony is under indictment by the [International Criminal Court](#), and he particularly dreads judgment in [The Hague](#). Securing his surrender may involve a Ugandan promise of house arrest or exile to a country not party to the ICC -- the traditional tyrant's bribe.

Like [Idi Amin](#) in his Saudi exile, Kony may live for many years and

die in comfort. This would not be justice. But many of his victims seem to prefer peace to a grand

reckoning. And at least Kony's immense darkness would finally be confined to his own heart.

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