



UGANDA: DOMINIC ONGWEN'S TRANSFER TO THE ICC, A STEP TOWARDS ACCOUNTABILITY FOR CRIMES BY THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY

London, 20 January 2015 – REDRESS welcomes the transfer of former Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) commander Dominic Ongwen to the International Criminal Court today as an important step towards accountability for the egregious crimes committed by the LRA against thousands of defenceless men, women and children in northern Uganda.

“LRA leaders have evaded accountability for their atrocities for too long, but they will not escape justice. Hopefully, Dominic Ongwen’s transfer to the ICC will make other armed group leaders think twice before launching brutal and unjustified attacks against defenceless civilians,” said Carla Ferstman, Director of REDRESS.

In 2005, the ICC issued arrest warrants for five LRA leaders for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including Ongwen. Two arrest warrants against Joseph Kony (alleged Commander-in-Chief of the LRA) and Okot Odhiambo (its alleged Deputy Army Commander) are still outstanding while two other leaders are reported to have died since.

“Considering that almost 10 years has passed since the arrests warrants were issued, it’s now crucial for the ICC to ensure that all victims who wish to participate in proceedings have an opportunity to do so,” said Ferstman. **“The Court needs to expedite and intensify its efforts to reach out to victims and affected communities, and respond to any questions and concerns they may have, including the many victims who engaged with the Court back then.”**

Ongwen is charged with three counts of crimes against humanity and four counts of war crimes arising from several attacks carried out in northern Uganda between 2002 and 2004, including one against a camp for internally displaced people. He is alleged to have played a key role in massive killings, abduction of children for use as soldiers or sex slaves, mutilation and pillaging.

The charges brought by the ICC only cover LRA actions in Uganda and for a limited time period, despite the fact that the LRA has extended its attacks in recent years to neighbouring countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan.

“We urge the ICC Prosecutor to consider how to bring additional charges to fully capture the scale of the LRA crimes in the region,” added Ferstman. **“The victims of the LRA in countries other than Uganda should not be forgotten.”**

Ongwen is only the second LRA leader to face justice for the serious international crimes committed by the armed group. The first one, Thomas Kwoyelo, is being tried before the

International Crimes Division (ICD) of the Ugandan High Court, which was established in 2011, to a large degree, to prosecute serious crimes committed during the conflict. However, his case has been blocked due to disputes over whether he can resort to the amnesty provided under Ugandan law.

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REDRESS is an award-winning human rights charity based in London which works internationally to combat torture by seeking justice and reparation for torture survivors. We are also the informal facilitator of the Victims' Rights Working Group (www.vrwg.org), a network of more than 400 national and international organisations and experts that advocates on victims' issues before the International Criminal Court.