

Lord's Resistance Army is reemerging in central Africa, warns Catholic bishop

by [Fredrick Nzwili](#) in the [March 2, 2016](#) issue

A senior Roman Catholic bishop in the Central African Republic is warning that the Lord's Resistance Army, a rebel force that killed more than 100,000 people in northern Uganda in the 1980s and '90s, is rising up again in his country.

Nestor Desire Nongo-Aziagbia said the LRA, led by self-declared prophet Joseph Kony, has become one of the biggest threats to peace in his country and in neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan.

"They continue to enslave villagers, making them load carriers and sex slaves," he said. "They are also burning down villages."

The reappearance comes as Dominic Ongwen, former child soldier and a rebel commander, faces up to 70 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity before the International Criminal Court based at the Hague.

The charges stem from LRA actions in northern Uganda, where the guerrilla group originated in 1986. Ongwen was abducted by the LRA at the age of ten.

For more than 20 years, the rebel force abducted children and turned them into child soldiers and sex slaves, while murdering, mutilating, and abducting villagers.

"This is of great concern to us," said Musa Khalil, the vice chair of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, a peace-building organization in northern Uganda. "The group is still holding our children who it abducted. A resurgence complicates their return."

Around 2002, the Ugandan army drove out the LRA, and the group is now scattered across the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan. Ugandan commandos backed by U.S. special operations forces are hunting down Kony but have not been able to arrest him.

"We are concerned there's no political will to defeat the rebels," Nongo-Aziagbia said.

Civil society groups, such as Invisible Children and The Resolve, which track LRA activities, say there are large-scale attacks by the LRA in the remote gold and diamond mining towns in northern CAR.

On January 21, the rebels attacked a Catholic mission in the Bangassou Diocese and beat up Latin American nuns before stealing food, money, and medicines. —Religion News Service

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