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Uganda: Government should address attacks on civilians urgently

Uganda must take immediate steps to prevent further human right abuses, including the killing of unarmed civilians, Amnesty International urged today, in reaction to the latest attack on civilians by the armed group the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

Amnesty International strongly condemns the attack at Barlonyo Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camp in Lira District, Northern Uganda in which allegedly 190 people, mainly women and children, reportedly died.

"Attacks on civilians cannot be justified in any circumstances," the organization said.

"The LRA should immediately cease all attacks on civilians, end all forcible abductions and release all those held as captives, especially children," Amnesty International added.

"The Ugandan authorities should show their commitment to the basic principle of protection of civilian populations by taking effective measures to boost security at all existing IDPs camps in Northern Uganda," the organization concluded.

In the 18-year conflict between the LRA and the Government of Uganda, civilians remain the prime target of attacks, killings, maiming, abductions and destruction of property. These attacks should be addressed as a matter of urgency. Over 1.2 million people are living in testing conditions in IDP Camps across Northern Uganda.

"Protection of the civilian population is a cornerstone of International Humanitarian Law," the organization said. The civilian population, as well as individual civilians, should not be the object of attack," Amnesty International urged.

Background

The LRA attacked the IDP camp at Barlonya, about 26 Kms from Lira Town, in Northern Uganda on 21 February, 2004, killing about 190 people and injuring countless others. The population in the camp was estimated at 4,800. This is the second attack by the LRA on an IDP camp in Lira District in one month. On 5 February, LRA killed about 50 people in Abia Camp, about 10 Kms away from Barlonyo. The Ugandan authorities have ordered an investigation in the Abia camp attack.

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