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Uganda: Governments must back first ever arrest warrants by International Criminal Court

Amnesty International today called on all states to cooperate in arresting and surrendering five men charged by the International Criminal Court (ICC) with war crimes and crimes against humanity in northern Uganda.

In its first ever indictments, the new global tribunal charged the head of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) Joseph Kony and four other senior leaders with crimes that have included the killing, maiming, abduction, rape and forced recruitment of thousands of people, including, in many cases children. The four other leaders were named as Vincent Otti, Okot Odhiambo, Dominic Ongwen and Raska Lukwiya.

"This is a historic step towards establishing global standards of justice and bringing that justice to the victims of one of the world's worst and most neglected humanitarian crises," said Kolawole Olaniyan, Director of Amnesty International's Africa programme. "The people of northern Uganda have already suffered 19 years of brutal conflict. By resisting calls to suspend the investigation in favour of further political negotiations, the ICC has sent a clear message that, without justice, there can be no prospect of a lasting peace for the region".

"States where the accused may be located, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Uganda, must now take immediate measures to identify their whereabouts and arrest them as soon as possible in order to surrender them promptly to the ICC," said Kolawole Olaniyan.

To facilitate this process, states that have not yet done so should enact effective national laws without delay providing full cooperation to the ICC.

The organization expressed its concern that the Prosecutor had not sought arrest warrants for any members of government armed forces or their civilian superiors for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed since 1 July 2002.

"The ICC, together with the Ugandan government, must also take steps to end the impunity the government granted to thousands of others accused of crimes in the region, including members of government forces and their civilian superiors. In particular, Uganda must repeal a general amnesty for these crimes, which was adopted contrary to international law," said Kolawole Olaniyan.

For the full media briefing, *Uganda: First ever arrest warrants by International Criminal Court - a first step towards addressing impunity*, please see: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engaf590082005>

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