

Wanted. Mothers say their children disappeared during rebel attacks.

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AMURU. A 2009 raid by Ugandan troops on a Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) camp in DR Congo sent the rebels fleeing into the jungle, and separated Lilly Atong from her son, George Bush.

To date, George Bush's whereabouts remain unknown. If alive, he is 14 years old, according to Ms Atong, 38.

Ms Atong is one of the many girls the LRA abducted in Olwal Village in Amuru Sub-county, Amuru District, in 1991. She was only 12.

Like many other girls that were abducted, the rebels forced her to stay with one of the LRA commanders. The commander, who she declines to name, is the father of her five children. Of the five, George Bush went missing in 2009.

"We all got scattered when we were attacked. That was the last time I saw my son who was aged six. I thought one of the people in the LRA camp had kept my child. But my search never yielded any fruit," she says.

She adds that when she returned from LRA captivity in 2010, she had hoped that maybe her child had been either rescued by the Uganda People's Defence Force or that the people who had fled from the LRA in DR Congo to Uganda had travelled along with him.

"There are many children, who were helped by those who managed to escape from the LRA. But to my disappointment, there has never been any chance for me to see my child," she says.

Now Ms Atong's hope for seeing her son is fading away. She says she fears her son might have died during the crossfire between the Ugandan army and the rebels.

She wants the government to ensure that children born in captivity are brought back home since they are Ugandans.

Ms Evelyn Amony, a former 'wife' to rebel leader Joseph Kony, says her daughter is missing, 13 years after her return from captivity.

Her four-year-old daughter went missing in 2004 when Ugandan forces battled the rebels who were then still in the south of the Sudan.

Ms Amony, who escaped from the LRA in 2005, says her search for her

Former LRA abductees cry for missing children



Desperate. Some of the women who were abducted by the LRA when they were still young girls. Many are worried since the children they gave birth to while in captivity are missing. PHOTO BY JAMES OWICH

daughter has been fruitless.

"I am desperate to know where my daughter is. Whoever has a clue on where she might be should help. It is really heartbreaking," Ms Amony says.

Ms Amony, who is the chairperson of the Women Advocacy Network (WAN), a local non-governmental organisation that brings together more than 600 former abducted girls, says many women who spent years in LRA captivity are in despair after their children went missing under unclear circumstances.

"The whereabouts of many children is not known. We, the mothers, feel the pain. If it was death, it would be understandable, [but] not [disappearing] just like that. We are not at

peace at all," says Ms Amony, who had two children with Kony.

She says plans are underway to document details of the missing children to help in tracing them.

"We do not have the figures with us here. But we are many who have

not been able to meet our children..." she says.

The retired Bishop of Kitgum Diocese Macleod Baker Ochola says religious leaders want the government to reconsider peace talks [with the rebels] to save the lives of the children, who were born to parents who were in captivity.

He says they are concerned that the abducted children bore children but their children are missing.

The prime minister of the Acholi Cultural Institution, Mr Ambrose Olaa, says the government should settle for a Transitional Justice System.

Mr Isaac Odiya Okwir, a transitional justice expert, says plans are underway to trace the missing children.

30,000

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO WERE ABDUCTED DURING THE LRA WAR IN NORTHERN UGANDA

What they say...

"Government should settle for a Transitional Justice System,"
AMBROSE OLAA,
PRIME MINISTER
OF THE ACHOLI
CULTURAL
INSTITUTION



"We are concerned that the abducted children's children are missing. We cannot tell whether the children were killed,"

MACLEOD BAKER OCHOLA, RETIRED BISHOP OF KITGUM DIOCESE

"There are many children, who were helped by those who managed to escape from the LRA. But to my disappointment, there has never been any chance for me to see my child."

LILLY ATONG, MOTHER

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EVELYN AMONY, MOTHER

It is believed that as the battle between the Ugandan troops and the rebels went on, some children fled. Other children are believed to have been taken up with good Samaritans who are now the ones still keeping them since there has not been any initiative by the government to take them up.

The LRA waged a two-decade war in northern Uganda and abducted nearly 30,000 children according to the United Nations Children's Fund.

During the insurgency, the rebels conscripted children. It used some as porters and others as sex slaves. The war displaced about 1.5 million people while tens of thousands were killed.

briefly

Oulanyah advises parents

LIRA. The Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Mr Jacob Oulanyah, has asked the

Residents reject Bill

PADER. The Pader District Woman MP, Ms Lowila Oketayot, has prom-

Strike: One dies in Kitgum

KITGUM. An elderly woman passed on at Kitgum Hospital, one of the government

Men suffer violence

GULU. Men in Acholi sub-region,

Man survives death

GULU. A