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**FORMER U.N. UNDER-SECRETARY GENERAL
CALLS SITUATION IN NORTHERN UGANDA ‘GENOCIDE;’
URGES SUPPORT FOR ENFORCEMENT OF U.N. RESOLUTION 1612
AIMED AT PROTECTING CHILDREN DURING ARMED CONFLICT**

BRONX, NY — A former U.N. Under-Secretary General and Uganda Foreign Minister has called the ongoing violence in northern Uganda “genocide” and said the situation there was far worse than the one occurring in the Darfur region of Sudan, where at least tens of thousands are estimated to have died.

Speaking on September 14 at Lehman College, where he received a Doctor of Humane Letters degree, Mr. Olara Otunnu said that the twenty-year conflict in northern Uganda had led to massive atrocities, destruction, rapes, abductions, and infant mortality and produced an epidemic of HIV/AIDS. More than 1.6 million people have been forcibly relocated to what were effectively concentration camps in “abominable conditions,” he said, while two generations of children have been deprived of education and basic health care. “An entire society,” he said, “is being systematically destroyed in full view of the international community.”

“When the Holocaust exterminated millions of Jews in Europe, we said ‘never again.’ When genocide was perpetrated in Rwanda, we said ‘never again,’” Mr. Otunnu told the audience of 500 students, faculty and staff. “The genocide unfolding in northern Uganda is happening on our watch, and with our full knowledge. Why is there no action? And this humanitarian and human rights catastrophe has been going on non-stop for twenty years.”

Mr. Otunnu served from 1998 until August 2005 as U.N. Under-Secretary General and Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict. In July, he led the effort that culminated in Security Council resolution 1612, which establishes the first comprehensive monitoring and reporting system to protect children in these situations. The resolution includes a “naming and shaming list” of 54 offending parties, rebel groups as well as governments, that are cited for grave violations against children. The groups include government forces in the Congo, Myanmar and Uganda.

Describing the resolution and its reporting and enforcement mechanisms as an “historic development of great consequence,” Mr. Otunnu asked the Lehman audience to pressure those on the “naming and shaming” list, as well as the U.N., to ensure compliance with the measures contained in resolution 1612 in order to “stem the tide of this abomination against children.” According to the U.N., two million children were killed in the last decade, and six million injured or disabled, during situations of armed conflict. In some cases, children were abducted or abused; others were forced into battle as soldiers.

As a student leader at Makerere University in Uganda, Mr. Otunnu helped to lead the resistance against the regime of Idi Amin, who was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Ugandans during the 1970s. As the Uganda Minister for Foreign Affairs, he played a prominent role in peace talks that culminated in the 1985 Nairobi Agreement, which sought to end Uganda’s political instability and cyclical violence.

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