

Testimony of Invisible Children Hawai'i Club Honolulu, Hawai'i

Invisible Children Hawai'i (ICH) is a group of college students from Hawai'i Pacific University dedicated to relieving the suffering of children both in Hawai'i and around the world. Created in the spring of 2007, ICH's committed members began by organizing a sleepover on State Capitol grounds to show support for the child soldiers of Uganda. Over 200 supporters braved the rain to join the event and 100 spent the night. Since then, ICH has continued its work by educating hundreds of students about the tragedies occurring in Northern Uganda, and raising over \$4000 for Atanga Secondary School and Sacred Heart School for the education of children living in displacement camps. In spring 2008, ICH held another sleepover at the State Capitol and was joined by Representatives John Mizuno, Karen Awana, and Tom Brower. A keynote speech was given by Representative Gene Ward. We were especially proud to educate local high school students from the Honolulu Community Action Program (HCAP) about the cause. We worked with other Hawai'i Pacific University clubs, University of Hawai'i Social Work students and Argosy University psychology students and sponsored three runners in the Honolulu Marathon. ICH continues to address social injustice regarding children both in Hawai'i and abroad, and is confident that a few college students can, in fact, make a difference.

The purpose of the resolution "CONDEMNING THE HUMAN RIGHTS ATROCITIES AND VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN NORTHERN UGANDA AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO AND URGING CONGRESS TO LEAD THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN EFFORTS TO PROTECT CHILDREN OF UGANDA AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO AND BRING JOSEPH KONY AND THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY TO JUSTICE" is to voice Hawaii's opposition to the humanitarian crisis presently occurring in Uganda, the Democratic Republic Congo, Sudan and other countries by urging Congress to lead the international community in efforts to protect the children of these nations.

The citizens of Northern Uganda have faced atrocities for more than twenty years due to the armed conflict between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army, an armed rebel paramilitary group trying to topple the Ugandan government. The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland, has described the guerilla war in northern Uganda as "the world's greatest neglected humanitarian crisis."

Of the 300,000 child soldiers in the world today, 30,000 of these are in Uganda and they make up 90% of the Lord's Resistance Army. Statistics show that 77% of child abductees have seen someone murdered, 39% have been forced to kill someone with their own hands, and 35% of female soldiers have been sexually abused. Most other children have also been beaten brutally and forced to burn down towns and houses and abduct other children.

Currently an estimated 1.7 million people still remain internally displaced in northern Uganda as a result of the conflict between the government and the Lord's Resistance Army. A growing number of people are being displaced, murdered and abused in the Democratic Republic of Congo as the Lord's Resistance Army terrorizes the area. The effects of the war are seen most prevalently in the lives of the children of these nations. These children face issues of malnutrition, lack of food and water supplies, and other physiological as well as psychological problems from living and fighting in such a long-lasting conflict.

"I support the passage of this resolution and testify that I am against the human rights atrocities and violence presently occurring in Uganda, and Democratic Republic of Congo, by urging Congress to lead the international community in efforts to protect the children of these nations."

Signed:

Sara S. Ortiz

20 March 2009