

*Please pray for the leadership and witness of **Province de l'Eglise Anglicane du Congo**, and all others who work for peace with justice in the Democratic Republic of Congo.*

KAIROS Appeal to the Canadian Government to Work for Peace in the DRC  
November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Hostilities have escalated in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with recent attacks on Goma, the capital of the province of North Kivu. The National People's Defense Congress (CNDP), headed by Laurent Nkunda, is fighting the Armed Forces of the DRC (the FARDC), itself supported by the United Nations Observation Mission in Congo (MONUC). In addition to bringing further misery to people already suffering since 1994, this new crisis is destroying the Congo's progress towards peace and democratization, achieved in part through the efforts by the international community and Canada.

One month ago, renewed violence drove 250,000 people from their homes, adding to the million-and-a-half persons already displaced in the province, almost one-third of its total population. The fate of civilians in zones touched by combat is dramatic: internally-displaced persons' (IDP) camps have been used as bases of operations for rebels, more than 40 health centres and 80 humanitarian convoys and facilities have been attacked. The BBC has also reported that IDP camps are now being burned to the ground.

MONUC's 17,000 soldiers, 6,000 of whom are based in the East, are overwhelmed. In early October, Alan Doss, Special Representative of the UN's Secretary General in the DRC, requested that the Security Council send more troops and logistical support to respond to the renewed violence. MONUC is incapable of fulfilling its mandate, which, since May 2007, authorizes it to use force to overcome armed groups like the CNDP or foreign armed groups like the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) still present in North and South Kivu. The population is now venting its frustrations on MONUC's troops, accusing them of extending the conflict to maintain their well-paid presence, and of participating in the trafficking of arms and precious substances.

Finally, the Amani Program (*amani* is swahili for peace), signed during the Goma conference in January 2008, established a disarmament and mobilization process and laid the foundations for a reconstruction program in the region. All the Congolese armed groups, including the CNDP, accepted it. In addition, this conference brought together representatives of all Kivu's ethnic communities, religions and civil society to air their mutual grievances. During this assembly, representatives of Tutsi communities of South and North Kivu as well as representatives of Congolese Tutsi refugees still in Rwanda unanimously rejected the CNDP's claim that it would ensure their safety. In early October, the CNDP reneged on its promises and renewed its military operations for the "liberation of DRC from the yoke of its current government".

The causes of the current conflict are numerous and complex; among the most important are a weakened state, a legacy of Mobutu Sese Seko's regime, and the lingering repercussions of the genocide in Rwanda.

The East of the DRC has suffered in particular with the continued presence of Rwandan Hutu militias that exploit Congo's mineral wealth and terrorize local civilian populations. Finally the CNDP, which is supported by the Tutsi-led Rwandan government and military, exerts control over a greater portion of North Kivu.

It is time to put into practice the numerous resolutions of the United Nations, to make warmongers who continue to tyrannize the eastern Congo respect international law and make leaders in the DRC keep their promises. The international community, including Canada, has been involved in various ways to bring peace to the DRC and the Great Lakes Region<sup>1</sup> and must mobilize today to build on their achievements and respond adequately to demobilize armed groups in the DRC.

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<sup>1</sup> Canada provides nine people to the MONUC and contributes to its financing. Canada supported the electoral process in DRC; together with the Netherlands, Canada coordinated the Friends of the Great Lakes group that supported the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (CIRGL). Canada supported the Peace Mission in Burundi, and provided about 60 soldiers to the international emergency army, Operation Artemis in June 2003, in Ituri.

For this reason we reiterate the appeal of church partners in the DRC for the international community to take effective measures to oblige armed groups to respect the pacts that they have signed and to respect the integrity of the DRC's territory.

For its part, Canada must work actively to:

- Urge the Security Council to provide the necessary means for the MONUC to fulfill its mandate;
- Exert pressure on the governments of the DRC and Rwanda to enter into renewed discussions according to the agreements signed and the previously accepted mechanisms;
- Work with Rwanda to help repatriate Rwandan citizens, particularly members of the FDLR, still active in the DRC;
- Demand that the Security Council undertake an inquest into illegal mineral trading in this region to identify the instigators and the beneficiaries.

In recent years, Canada has devoted significant military resources to the war in Afghanistan and has retreated from its historic peacekeeping role. It is significant to note that twice in the past five years, Canada has rejected calls from the UN to increase its participation in the UN peacekeeping mission in the Congo.

Twenty years ago, Canada contributed more than 10 per cent of all peacekeeping troops to the UN. Today, Canadian participation is less than 0.1 per cent. Yet, Canada is well positioned to play an historic role in establishing and maintaining peace in the DRC. Many of our people speak French, and we are still well respected in the region.

As a rich country, with mining and investment interests spread throughout the country, Canada needs to play a more active and positive role in helping secure peace and protecting human rights in the DRC.

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