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Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes in Africa



MEDIA MONITORING

2 October 2014

MESSAGE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF NON-VIOLENCE

New York, 2 October 2014 - On this International Day of Non-Violence, we commemorate the philosophy of the late Mahatma Gandhi, who through his example proved that peaceful protests could accomplish much more than military aggression.

The principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, the year of Gandhi's death, owe much to his beliefs.

At this time of increased sectarian violence and the wanton destruction of cultural sites and heritage, it is timely to recall Gandhi's call for peace and reconciliation, and his warning that, "An eye for an eye ends up making the whole world blind."

We have to foster a culture of peace, built on dialogue and understanding, for living together in harmony while respecting and celebrating humanity's rich diversity.

There is no greater tool than education to enhance human dignity, promote a culture of non-violence, and build lasting peace. Through education, we can craft new ways of living with each other and the planet. Education can also lay the foundation for developing new forms of global citizenship and solidarity that are so essential in today's world.

On this Day, I call on all people to counter the forces of intolerance, advance global citizenship and forge human solidarity based on Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence.

DR Congo: Ban says recommitment to Peace Framework critical to addressing root cause of conflict

Source: UN News Centre

22 September 2014 - United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon today said that addressing the root causes of the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

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and the region requires a recommitment to all national and regional commitments under the agreed-to peace Framework.

“In recent months, there has been progress on several commitments under the Framework. The capacity of armed groups to attack civilians in eastern DRC has been impaired, particularly after the defeat of the former M23 at the end of 2013. This has improved security in the region,” said Mr. Ban at a Headquarters meeting of the signatories of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the region, who wrapped up their work with the approval of a Communiqué.

On 24 February 2013, recognizing the recurring cycles of conflict and violence that permeate the eastern DRC, 11 African countries [...] Framework, which represents an avenue of hope for the region’s people to build stability by addressing the root causes of the conflict and fostering trust between neighbors.

At today’s [22 September 2014] fourth meeting reviewing the progress of the Framework, Mr. Ban was joined by several high-level officials including President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz of Mauritania, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, and Vice-President Manuel Domingos Vicente of Angola. Several officials from the African Union and the South African Development Community (SADC) were also in attendance.

“Over the next few years, several countries of the Great Lakes region will be holding pivotal elections. This should strengthen the democratic culture in the region. I hope these countries will emerge from the elections stronger, more united and more stable,” said Mr. Ban.

But several armed groups continue to hamper these efforts. The Nairobi Declarations of the Kampala process have been implemented too slowly. And there remains a lack of trust among some countries of the region.

“We must speed up the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations of the Kampala Process, including the repatriation of eligible former M23 elements to the DRC. And we must continue building trust and confidence among countries of the region,” Mr. Ban added.

He recalled that at the third meeting, held at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa in January, participants endorsed the regional Plan of Action and 15 priority activities for implementation of the Framework. They also requested that the Technical Support Committee submit a progress report on the implementation of the regional Plan of Action.

Presented by the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy and the Special Representative of the African Union Chairperson, the report documents progress and offers recommendations.

“I welcome the collective and unequivocal message to the FDLR that they should voluntarily surrender and disarm before the 2nd of January 2015,” the UN chief said.

The Secretary-General also underscored the need for donors, especially the African Development Bank, the European Union, the World Bank and bilateral partners, to remain committed to supporting initiatives for peace, security and cooperation in the region.

“We should spare no effort to end the instability that has affected millions of people and impeded development and prosperity in the region for far too long,” Mr. Ban reiterated.

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In their remarks, the regional leaders expressed their appreciation to former Special Envoy Mary Robinson for her valuable efforts to achieve peace and stability in eastern DRC and the region, and welcomed Mr. Said Djinnit as the new Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region.

Speaking to the leaders for the first time, Special Envoy Djinnit noted: "The Great Lakes region is at a crossroads. It can only realize its vast potential once sensitive security concerns are fully resolved and relations between neighbouring countries improve." He pledged to work closely with all key stakeholders to ensure that the regional accord, which has become known as the "Framework of Hope", delivers on its promises.

UN Appoints Rwanda to Champion Post MDGs Projects, Reports KT Press

New York, 30 September 2014 - The UN has appointed Rwanda to champion post-Millennium Development Goals pilot projects, 15 months before the MDGs hit their deadline.

The UN says Rwanda displayed remarkable performance over the last 15 years under the UN development agenda.

UN said Rwanda's experience will guide the country to serve as a model in strengthening capacities and building effective institutions after 2015. Rwanda will implement the pilot projects alongside Tunisia.

Rwanda's President Paul Kagame, who co-chairs the MDG's Advocacy group, said experiences are seen as opportunities to strengthen institutions and improve service delivery. "The MDGs are a floor, not a ceiling."

He also said being on-track did not mean problems were solved. Kagame was speaking on Friday in New York at the launch of the MDGs report.

The report indicated extreme poverty had dropped by 22%, children's enrollment in schools improved from 83% to 90% globally while women's access to employment in non-agricultural sectors increased from 35% to 40%.

The global rate of under-five mortality dropped from 90 to 48 deaths, between 1990 and 2013.

President Kagame said more than one million people had escaped extreme poverty over the past five years, child mortality declined, at the fastest rate, ever recorded in history from 62 in 2008 to 30 now.

Malaria deaths have been reduced by nearly 70%, medical insurance subscription increased to 90%, 95% women receive antenatal care during pregnancy and 97% give birth in the presence of a medical professional. Gender equality scores high with a world record of women representation in parliament dramatically rising from 54 to 62%.

"Rwanda has chosen to invest in people, and built accountable delivery systems to do so," said Kagame.

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The Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg and President Paul Kagame, who both co-chair the MDG's Advocacy group, emphasized the MDGs deadline is not the finish line.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon was delighted that global poverty has been halved five years ahead of the 2015 time frame, with 90% of children in developing regions now having access to primary education, and disparities between boys and girls in enrollment narrowing.

RDC: 100 personnes mortes dans un camp

Source: BBC Afrique

1 octobre 2014 - Plus de 100 personnes sont mortes de faim et de maladie dans un camp militaire reculé du nord de la République démocratique du Congo, selon un rapport de Human Rights Watch.

Les anciens combattants de groupes armés démobilisés, leurs épouses et leurs enfants avaient été transféré dans ce camp l'an dernier, en attendant leur intégration dans l'armée ou leur retour à la vie civile grâce au programme Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réinsertion (DDR).

Les provisions auraient toutefois été épuisées vers la fin de l'année 2013 et le gouvernement aurait ensuite envoyé des quantités minimales de nourriture et de médicaments.

"La peau sur les os" Le mauvais état des routes dans la région aurait compromis l'approvisionnement. Quant à l'agent de la santé travaillant dans le camp, il ne disposerait de quasiment aucun matériel ou médicament pour soigner les malades, et ne parlerait pas leur langue.

Human Rights Watch a rapporté les paroles d'un ancien combattant, qui aurait notamment comparé les détenus à des victimes de la famine en Somalie et en Éthiopie: "Nous avons vu des personnes comme ça ici. Un adulte avec la peau sur les os... Nous avons d'abord enterré les morts dans le cimetière public. Lorsque nous avons vu que la situation devenait de plus en plus épouvantable, nous avons commencé à les enterrer dans le centre de regroupement, loin de la population civile. Nous pouvions enterrer jusqu'à cinq corps par jour."

Programme DDR en retard

Ida Sawyer, chercheuse senior sur la RDC, estime que "la négligence du gouvernement congolais envers ces anciens combattants et leurs familles est criminelle."

Le 30 septembre, Alexandre Luba Ntambo, le vice-Premier ministre et ministre de la Défense et des Anciens combattants de la RD Congo, aurait indiqué à Human Rights Watch que les anciens combattants et leurs familles étaient détenus depuis bien plus longtemps que prévu en raison de retards dans la mise en œuvre du programme DDR et de l'"hésitation des bailleurs de fonds" à financer le programme.

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More than 100 former militiamen and family members die in DRC camp

Source: Deutsche Presse-Agentur

Johannesburg, 1 October 2014 - More than 100 demobilized militia fighters and their family members have died from starvation and disease in a remote military camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said Wednesday.

The government kept the former fighters in the north-western Kotakoli camp much longer than the intended three months, HRW said, and failed to provide enough food and health care.

The demobilized fighters belonged to armed groups that remained active in eastern DRC after the end of a civil war more than a decade ago.

Some 941 surrendered fighters and several hundred family members were sent to the camp in September 2013 to wait for integration into the military or into civilian life.

Supplies ran out by the end of the year and the government only sent minimal food and medicine.

People "looked like the photos of famine in Somalia and Ethiopia," a 23-year-old former combatant told HRW, adding that up to five bodies could be buried in one day.

The demobilized fighters were kept in Kotakoli because of delays and donor hesitation to finance the demobilization programme, Defence Minister Alexandre Luba Ntambo told HRW.

"We did not voluntarily choose for these people to go hungry or to see them die, but we had difficulties getting them the basic provisions," Ntambo was quoted as saying. The government has said it is investigating the situation in the camp.

Many of the demobilized fighters belonged to the M23 group, which was defeated by the army and a United Nations special intervention brigade in November 2013.

Short for the Movement of March 23, the group was formed in early 2012 when nearly 300 Congolese soldiers turned against the government, citing poor conditions in the army and accusing it of reneging on a 2009 peace deal with the National Congress for the Defence of the People, a militia active in the east of the country.

Scores die in DR Congo camp due to 'criminal neglect': HRW

Source: AFP World News

Kinshasa, 1 October - Scores of people including 57 children have died of hunger or disease in a camp for demobilised rebels in the DR Congo, Human Rights Watch said Wednesday, accusing the government of "criminal negligence".

"Officials failed to provide adequate food and health care" to the inmates at the remote camp in Kotakoli in the far northwest of the country, the New York-based rights group said.

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It said 42 demobilised fighters and "at least five women and 57 children" had died at the camp since December 2013 -- and a diplomat said authorities have been aware of the deaths for months.

"The Congolese government's neglect of these former fighters and their families is criminal," said Ida Sawyer, a senior Congo researcher for the group, urging the government to move the inmates "before more people die".

"The military (should) investigate and prosecute those responsible for needless deaths in the camp," Sawyer added.

Kotakoli is among three military camps set aside for demobilised fighters from the DR Congo's myriad armed groups under a government programme to reinsert them into society or absorb them into the army.

The Kotakoli inmates said they had been told they would be at the camp for no more than three months.

A diplomat in Kinshasa confirmed that conditions at the camp were "dire" and said that it had been known for months that several dozen people had died there.

A Western military source said the camp -- which HRW described as a "rundown former military commando training centre built in 1965" -- housed 865 former rebels and 226 of their family members as of mid-July.

Defence Minister Alexandre Luba Ntambo, asked about the HRW's allegations, conceded that the situation at the camp was "bad" and referred to "people who were not adjusting".

But he said the government "did not send people there to kill them" and was taking steps to address the problem.

A diplomat said "civil authorities are well aware of the problem" but their hands were tied pending decisions "from the high military hierarchy."

HRW said supplying the camp was difficult because of the poor state of roads in the area, adding that a health worker had few supplies and could not speak the same languages as the ex-combatants.

Many rebel groups remain active in the eastern DR Congo after two decades of conflict in the region.

RDC: le mystère de la présence des forces burundaises à Kiliba

Par RFI

1 octobre 2014 - La Mission des Nations unies pour le Congo (Monusco) ainsi que les gouvernements burundais et congolais démentent toujours officiellement la présence d'hommes en armes et en uniformes militaires burundais dans l'est du Congo. Et pourtant, ils sont bien là,

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dans la plaine de la Ruzizi (Sud-Kivu), comme RFI a pu le constater. Selon plusieurs sources, il existerait un accord secret entre Kinshasa et Bujumbura pour permettre à l'armée burundaise de mener des opérations contre des rebelles. Une explication qui ne correspond pas vraiment à la réalité du terrain.

Depuis le début de l'année 2014, il n'y a eu aucune opération conjointe entre les armées burundaise et congolaise. Les rebelles se présentant comme les Forces nationales de libération (FNL) sont dans les moyens plateaux du territoire d'Uvira. Les forces burundaises de défense sont elles dans la plaine de la Ruzizi. C'est bien plus bas et pourtant elles ont été attaquées à plusieurs reprises ces derniers mois par les rebelles burundais. Aucune opération terrestre n'a eu lieu en représailles.

« Que font alors ces militaires burundais en territoire congolais ? », s'interrogent les observateurs, y compris au sein des FARDC, l'armée congolaise, dont la présence est minime dans la localité de Kiliba et ses différents secteurs. Kiliba, où se trouve le quartier général officieux de l'armée burundaise dans l'est du Congo, se situe à la frontière avec le Burundi. Malgré cette position stratégique, selon plusieurs sources, l'armée congolaise a ordre de n'y inspecter aucun véhicule militaire burundais et n'a qu'un droit d'accès limité.

Accès limité également pour la Monusco, qui a envoyé plusieurs missions sur le terrain depuis le début de l'année. Cet accès limité n'empêche cependant pas la mission onusienne et le groupe d'experts des Nations unies d'avoir toutes les informations, assurent plusieurs sources congolaises comme étrangères. Face aux démentis des gouvernements burundais et congolais et au silence de la Monusco, le mystère Kiliba reste entier.

Burundi : nomination des membres des Commissions Electorales Provinciales Indépendantes

Source: Xinhua

1 octobre 2014 - Les membres des Commissions Electorales Provinciales Indépendantes (CEPI) du Burundi ont été nommés hier à l'approche des élections générales de 2015. Sur un total de 162 membres nommés dans les 17 provinces que compte le pays, il y a 51 femmes, 13 représentants des confessions religieuses et un avocat. Les représentants des confessions religieuses occupent soit le poste de président, soit celui de vice-président. La mise en place des membres des CEPI permettra de mettre en place prochainement les autres membres des Commissions Electorales Communales Indépendantes dans les 129 communes du pays. Selon le calendrier électoral publié le 18 juillet par la CENI, les élections des députés et des conseillers communaux auront lieu le 26 mai 2015, l'élection présidentielle le 26 juin 2015, l'élection des sénateurs le 17 juillet 2015, et le deuxième tour de la présidentielle le 27 juillet 2015 en cas de nécessité. Le processus électoral sera clôturé par l'élection des conseils de collines et de quartiers en date du 24 août 2015.

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DR Congo Ebola outbreak has killed 42 since August: govt

Source: AFP World News / English Date: October 01, 2014

Kinshasa, 1 October 2014 - The Democratic Republic of Congo raised its death toll from the deadly Ebola virus to 42 on Wednesday as it struggled to contain the second outbreak of the deadly disease in Africa this year.

The latest figures include eight health workers, Health Minister Felix Kabange Numbi said in a message sent to AFP.

Some 70 cases of the deadly virus have been confirmed in a remote region near the town of Boende some 800 kilometres (500 miles) northwest of Kinshasa, with a mortality rate of around 60 percent.

According to the World Health Organization and the authorities in Kinshasa, the outbreak is not related to the worst ever epidemic of the virus which has killed more than 3,000 people in west Africa this year.

A month ago, the government said 32 people had been killed in the outbreak, the seventh Ebola outbreak since the disease was first identified in the former Zaire in 1976.

The last case in DR Congo, which has an incubation period of three weeks, was confirmed on 24 September, said the minister. Last month, Congolese authorities had declared the outbreak was "on its way to being controlled".

Ebola outbreak in DR Congo under control -- official

Source: Xinhua News Agency

Goma, 22 September 2014 - Ebola outbreak in Equateur province, north of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo), is soon being brought under control, an official source said on Sunday.

"DR Congo authorities and their partners have managed to contain the epidemic in the zone where it was initially declared, hence reducing the rate of contamination," the statement said, adding that "according to the country's health ministry, the disease was being brought under control."

The statement that cited Health Minister Felix Kabange said by Sept. 17, DR Congo had registered 71 Ebola cases with 40 deaths.

It further noted that in the last ten days, no new Ebola case has been reported.

The health minister thanked the population for following instructions and recommendations from health experts involved in the fight against Ebola.

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On Saturday, the Congolese cabinet decided to send more support to increase efficiency of medical teams on the ground.

CDC: Ebola could infect 1.4 million people by January

Source: USA Today

By Liz Szabo

23 September 2014 - If the world doesn't get the Ebola outbreak in West Africa under control quickly, the disease could become a permanent fixture in the region, spreading as routinely as malaria or the flu, the World Health Organization warns Tuesday in a new report.

In the worst-case scenario – if nothing is done to effectively control the outbreak — there could be 1.4 million Ebola cases in Liberia and Sierra Leone by the end of January, according to a report released Tuesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

That sort of exponential increase in cases makes it more likely that Ebola will become entrenched in West Africa, said Robert Murphy, a professor of medicine and biomedical engineering at Northwestern University.

If there are hundreds of thousands of Ebola cases, then "many more countries will have cases, and it won't be just West Africa," Murphy said. "There is so much mobility now, this can spread anywhere."

CDC officials say it's still possible to avoid this worst-case.

"It is still possible to reverse the epidemic, and we believe this can be done if a sufficient number of all patients are effectively isolated, either in Ebola Treatment Units or in other settings, such as community-based or home care," said Tom Frieden, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Once a sufficient number of Ebola patients are isolated, cases will decline very rapidly – almost as rapidly as they rose. A surge now can break the back of the epidemic."

The notion that Ebola could become endemic in West Africa spreading routinely, rather than in sporadic outbreaks is "a prospect that has never before been contemplated," according to a report published online in the New England Journal of Medicine.

There could be 20,000 cases by Nov. 2, with thousands of new cases per week, the report said. About 70% of patients are dying from the illness.

"We are concerned that without a massive increase in the response, way beyond what is being planned in scale and urgency ... it will prove impossible to bring the epidemic under control," wrote disease researchers Jeremy Farrar, of the Wellcome Trust, and Peter Piot, of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, in an accompanying editorial.

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The Ebola virus has caused more than 20 outbreaks in the past four decades, mostly in remote villages in Central Africa. Although some outbreaks were severe, public health officials were always able to put a stop to them -- even without effective treatments or vaccines -- by quickly and methodically diagnosing patients, making a list of everyone those patients might have exposed and then monitoring those contacts.

One hundred tons of medical supplies are being shipped from New York to Liberia and Sierra Leone. The supplies will help medical workers prevent the spread of the disease. VPC

The current outbreak appears to have begun the same way in the West African country of Guinea, with the first cases in December. The virus spread for three months, however, before public officials realized they were dealing with an Ebola outbreak. In contrast, doctors in the Democratic Republic of Congo took just days to confirm an Ebola outbreak after seeing the first cases.

In West Africa, Ebola has now infected at least 5,864 people -- killing 2,803 -- in Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria and Senegal, according to the WHO, which notes that the total number of cases likely is much higher, because many victims haven't yet been counted.

Farrar and Piot note that the WHO didn't declare a public health emergency until August, after the epidemic had been recognized for five months and had killed 1,000 people.

Last week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Beth Bell warned that the West African outbreak could last for years if the world doesn't halt its spread.

Le visa tombe

Source : Le Potentiel (DRC)

30 septembre 2014 - Le visa est supprimé pour les habitants de Kinshasa et de Brazzaville qui désirent traverser le fleuve Congo pour se rendre d'un côté comme de l'autre de deux capitales les plus rapprochées du monde. Le laissez-passer va être réinstauré, selon une information parue dans le quotidien kinois, Forum des As.

Mais attention ! Il y a une précision de taille : avec le laissez-passer, on ne pourra plus aller au-delà des deux capitales. Donc pour aller à Pointe-Noire, par exemple, il faut solliciter un visa. Que ceci soit clair.

Pour ceux qui ont la mémoire courte, le laissez-passer entre Kinshasa et Brazzaville avait été remplacé par un visa après l'expulsion de plus de 130 000 « Zaïrois » (Congolais de Kinshasa) du Congo-Brazzaville en avril 2014. Ils étaient devenus indésirables de l'autre côté du fleuve Congo, pour « séjour irrégulier », selon la police brazzavilloise. Depuis, les rapports se sont détériorés entre les deux capitales.

C'est vrai, la mesure de réinstaurer le laissez-passer entre Kinshasa et Brazzaville est à saluer. C'est vrai qu'il (re)facilitera le déplacement et les échanges commerciaux entre les deux capitales. Mais on ne devra pas vite oublier les causes. Une levée de visa, sans vrai discernement, risque de faciliter à nouveau le « séjour irrégulier » des ressortissants des deux

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capitales. Et là, on n'aura rien fait dans le sens de la cohabitation pacifique recherchée entre les deux peuples.

Mais, il y a plus que la simple question de la levée de visa. Quelque avantageuse soit-elle, la réinstauration du laissez-passer ne devrait pas éclipser la nécessité d'enquêter sur les allégations de violation des droits de l'homme lors des expulsions des Congolais de la RDC. Les plaies sont encore béantes et saignantes. Les traces de larmes sont encore visibles aux joues des expulsés qui ont « tout » perdu. Et de leurs biens, et de leur humanité, et de la vie tout court.

Il faut les voir pour y croire. Certains souffrent encore des dépressions et autres traumatismes dus au choc causé par ces expulsions massives accompagnées d'une rare violence. Ils ne demandent peut-être pas trop qu'un simple « pardon » des autorités brazzavilloises.

« Qu'avions-nous fait à nos frères et sœurs de Brazza ? », s'interrogeait une adolescente rencontrée à côté du mur du stade Cardinal Malula, en face de la maison communale de Kinshasa. Cette question cesse d'être personnelle pour devenir collective. Et, elle attend une réponse de ceux qui ont une portion de responsabilité dans la gestion de ce dossier sensible de vie et de survie.

Rwandan Militia Commander 'Tired Of War'

A commander involved in one of Africa's longest running conflicts tells Sky News he can't give up fighting without foreign help.

Source: Sky News

By Alex Crawford, Special Correspondent

The commander of one of the Rwandan militia hiding out in the eastern Congolese mountains has told Sky News his men will not disarm without guarantees for their safety.

Colonel Bonheur - as he called himself but which is almost certainly not his real name - said his band of soldiers would be forced to continue fighting unless a political solution can be found.

Speaking from his mountain hideout, he said: "We are tired of war. We want peace. But we need the international community to step in and mediate.

"They know what they have to do and they know very well how to solve the problem. They need to pressurise Rwanda."

He said he and his men want to return to Rwanda and reform the militia as a political party. That is unlikely to be accepted by the current President Paul Kagame, who they want to unseat. The colonel and his unit - which he called the Tigers - are a branch of the FDLR (The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda) - and are wanted by the United Nations for war crimes.

They are accused of being among those who tried to wipe out the Tutsis in Rwanda way back in 1994.

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The genocide then has been the backbone of the region's woes ever since. Wars have led to an estimated four million people losing their lives over the past 20 years.

The FDLR militias have been blamed for continued mass killings and rapes inside the Congo ever since and their existence has led to the creation of an estimated 30 Congolese armed groups who are also responsible for atrocities, as all the different armed groups battle for control of the region.

Military action against the FDLR was threatened by the UN, but it was persuaded to hold off until December after South Africa and Tanzania - who are allied with Congo's Joseph Kabila - argued the militia should be given time to voluntarily surrender their weapons.

It is an option America does not believe the rebels will take.

The colonel said: "We urge the international community to take pity on us."

He insisted some of his men had surrendered and handed in their weapons, but the remainder are fearful of giving up their guns because of reprisals from the Congolese.

Instead they have shifted on to the mountains with their families, where they shelter in straw huts, some with plastic sheeting but most without.

One woman said: "We are starving. We just eat leaves boiled in water."

Another man told us: "We are a people without a country now. We need help."

A global day of peace means little to these people.

Most were unaware of it and the colonel said disparagingly: "The Americans can sort peace here in an instant. They just don't want to."

He, like many others weary of the war in this region, believe the chaos and instability caused by it suits many who are plundering the country of its rich natural resources.

Goma peace concert criticised for overshadowing DR Congo's grim reality

Event attended by British actor Jude Law provoked controversy for using soldiers from Congo's overstretched armed forces

Source: The Guardian

By Jessica Hatcher

23 September 2014 - Josiane Nzuki, 15, raised her hand, took the microphone, and asked the organisers of Sunday's peace concert in Goma, featuring Akon and Jude Law, why they thought the Congolese city was the best place to hold it. It is the people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's provinces who live without peace, with commonplace sexual violence and without basic services or vaccination campaigns. It is in the rural areas that young people are lured or

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forced into association with armed groups. “It would be better to take this to where people are suffering, and for the organisers to see the reality,” she later explained.

The organisers smiled, and dodged her question, saying Goma was simply the best place for it. “I wasn’t happy,” she said. “But I’m a child – I can’t debate with Akon. So I thought, OK, I asked my question, and some people understood what I was trying to say.”

Sixteen years ago, a British actor called Jeremy Gilley had an idea to create “the first ever day of peace”, as he calls it. He persuaded the UN general assembly to create the day, on 21 September, which was unanimously adopted.

“Who will you make peace with today?” was the tagline of the concert held in Goma last weekend. Gilley makes films about bringing Peace Day to the world. His organisation, Peace One Day – a London-based team of 45 people – is funded by corporate sponsorship, humanitarian donors and film sales.

In September 2007, Gilley and Law travelled to Afghanistan to call for a ceasefire, and secure a promise from the Taliban not to target healthcare workers for one day. They returned for three subsequent years and noted a marked reduction in hostilities. This year, Gilley brought Peace Day to Congo, but critics were quick to point out that you cannot call a ceasefire here.

A UN staffer in Goma, speaking on condition of anonymity, described the festival as “a commercial act disguised as humanitarianism. If they announced a commercial event, by saying we’re the first people to bring Akon to Goma, then fine. But to say they’re doing this for the sake of peace? It’s patronising.”

There are scores of arts-based peace-building initiatives in Goma. The Amani Festival (Amani means peace in Kiswahili) in February attracted a crowd of 5,000, according to UN staff who helped organise it, roughly the number that turned out to see Akon. “People perceive it as an arrogant move to say, ‘we’re the first ones to come in here and do something for peace,’” the UN worker said.

To deliver their work, Peace One Day partners the UN. But UN teams in Goma made it clear from the outset that they would not make any concessions that could have a negative impact on their operations, the source said. The UN’s Congo mission, Monusco, provided police and security for Akon and Law, logistical support and some staff. Peacekeepers built a VIP area and stage, but no troops were moved.

The government, however, which is already stretched to the limit trying to secure the region, provided 500 Congolese security forces for the concert, according to the UN source. “Everyone is needed to fight armed groups, and then you take them away to secure a party scene? [The Congolese] are fed up of organisations arriving, announcing something huge, and leaving again. That’s what’s been happening for the last 40 years.”

As Akon surfed the heads and hands of elated Congolese (mainly young men) in a large ball, many people suspended their disbelief. But Micheline Mwendike, 29, likened the concert to getting drunk to escape problems. “You forget, but the next day you wake up and it’s the same.” She and other activists unite under an organisation called Lutte pour le Changement and have organised events on Peace Day for the past two years. “Everything is a slogan now,” she says. “I want to make peace with [Rwandan President Paul] Kagame [in reference to his alleged

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support of an armed rebel group, M23, that occupied swaths of North Kivu between 2012 and 2013], but does he want to open the political space to allow for peace with me? Peace Day should be an opportunity for resolution. We know how to sing and dance. My biggest criticism is the lack of concrete messaging.”

Many, however, support the symbolism of the day. Sinza Wolf, 29, a youth leader in Rutshuru, travelled 70km to Goma with 30 others to join a march on Peace Day. They lit candles for lost friends, released doves into the sky, and talked peace. For the previous two Peace Days, he had been living on the other side of an active frontline in rebel territory. “For a long time we couldn’t be here. This year, we are very glad. It’s important for us to see that people are fighting for the youth.”

Ray Torres, MONUSCO head of the Goma office, marched with him. “We’re not naive. We don’t think a march is going to bring peace to North Kivu. But it’s building momentum to make it unacceptable to be supporting or condoning an armed group.” It’s also boosting young people “to go back to their communities and to say, ‘give up your weapons’”, he said.

In the VIP area waiting for Akon, Pacifique Boraumzima Buluhukiro, the North Kivu coordinator for Interpeace, said: “It’s a very important day, to attract people’s attention to the meaning and significance of peace – but the biggest job is yet to be done.”

Uganda declines to join UN peacekeeping mission in CAR

Kampala, 26 September 2014 - The Ugandan military on Friday said it had declined to join the UN peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic (CAR) over the change of the mandate of the troops deployed in the country. Gen. Katumba Wamala, Chief of Defense Forces told reporters at the military headquarters that the UN wanted the Ugandan troops already deployed under the African Union to abandon the hunt for the notorious Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels.

The UN wanted the Ugandan troops to be moved to Bangui, the capital of CAR where there was fighting. "We had proposed to the UN to allow us join the UN mission in CAR but stay focused on pursuing the LRA but the UN had a different idea. They wanted us to move away from the sector and from the mission which took us to CAR," he said.

"We are still focused on hunting the remnants of the LRA and the operations have continued to be successful," Wamala said, noting that there is an increasing number of people fleeing from the LRA captivity.

Uganda had hoped that if it had joined the UN peacekeeping mission, the UN would pick up the costs of maintaining the Ugandan troops in CAR.

Uganda already has more than 4,000 troops in CAR pursuing the LRA, whose leader, Joseph Kony and some of his commanders are wanted by the International Criminal Court to answer charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in northern Uganda.

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Genocide court upholds life terms for Rwanda ex-ruling party bosses

Source: AFP World News

Arusha, 29 September 2014 - The UN-backed tribunal for Rwanda on Monday upheld the life sentences for two former heads of the ex-ruling party for genocide crimes committed in 1994.

Matthieu Ndirumutse and Edouard Karemera, the former head and deputy of Rwanda's National Revolutionary Movement for Development, had been handed life terms in 2011 for genocide, crimes against humanity and for not having prevented or denounced crimes committed by the party's militia, the Interahamwe, but had appealed the verdicts.

An estimated 800,000 people, mostly minority Tutsis, were killed in the genocide.

But appeals judge Theodor Meron said the verdict and sentence had been upheld and that the two would remain in detention pending their transfer to a jail where they will serve their sentence.

Ndirumutse was arrested in Mali in June 1998 and transferred to Arusha the following month. Karemera was arrested the same year in Togo.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) was set up to try those alleged to bear the greatest responsibility for the 1994 genocide.

Lesser suspects have been judged by the Rwandan courts and by several thousand grassroots courts, known as gacaca that were set up by the Rwandan government to deal with the sheer number of cases.

Spanish Diplomat Stabbed to Death in Khartoum

Source: Sudan Tribune (Paris)

Khartoum, 29 September 2014 - A Spanish diplomat has been found dead in his apartment in the affluent Garden City neighborhood of the Sudanese capital Khartoum. Sudan's interior ministry said in a statement on Monday that the diplomat was apparently stabbed to death.

"The 61-years old official headed the Spanish embassy's visa section and had worked in the country for three years", the statement said. A maid who worked at the apartment found the body and reported the death early on Monday morning.

The statement added that the police chief in Khartoum locality arrived at the crime scene immediately and a special team from the criminal investigation unit was assigned to lead investigations. Sudan's foreign ministry identified the diplomat as Emiliano Garcia in a separate statement.

"The police of Khartoum state and its teams of special criminal investigators have launched a probe in order to find the perpetrator or perpetrators as soon as possible," the statement said.

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It described the diplomat's death as a "regrettable incident" and underscored that the government is firmly committed to protecting all foreign diplomats in Sudan.

The ministry expressed condolences to the Spanish embassy and the family of the slain diplomat for their painful loss.

The Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation confirmed "with regret" the death of their diplomat adding that they remain in contact with the Sudanese Foreign Ministry, police and judicial authorities who are leading the investigation.

There are no indications so far if the incident is a normal homicide or one that is politically motivated. Police said they found no signs of a break-in to the apartment and no theft seem to have occurred.

In January 2008, John Granville, an official working for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Sudan, was shot and killed along with his Sudanese driver by gunmen in a passing car who cut him off as he was being driven home in Khartoum.

An Islamic militant group named "Ansar Al-Tawhid" claimed responsibility for the incident. A Sudanese court later sentenced to death four Sudanese nationals for the killing but the convicts managed to flee the country before the death penalty was carried out.

Also earlier this year Russia's consul and his wife have been stabbed in Khartoum outside the embassy's gates by a man from the Central African Republic (CAR).

According to the Sudanese police, the attacker mistakenly thought that the couple belonged to one of the western countries that sent troops to CAR recently.

During interrogation the assailant said that his brother was killed in Bangui by these forces and as such he thought retribution. He was reportedly in Sudan seeking medical treatment.

Centrafrique : Luanda annonce la participation des troupes angolaises à la Minusca

Jeune Afrique (France)

30 septembre 2014 - Un officiel de la diplomatie angolaise a annoncé lundi que Luanda enverra ses troupes en Centrafrique pour prendre part à la Minusca. Ce sera la première participation de l'Angola dans une opération de maintien de la paix des Nations unies.

"Ce sera une participation avec l'envoi d'une force significative sur le terrain en réponse à une demande du gouvernement de transition de la République centrafricaine et des Nations unies, notamment des États-Unis". Le 29 septembre, Joaquim do Espirito Santo, le directeur Afrique du ministère angolais des Relations extérieures, a ainsi annoncé la participation des troupes angolaises dans la Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations unies pour la stabilisation de la Centrafrique (MINUSCA).

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"Nous devons donner l'exemple et renforcer la présence de la mission afin d'assurer la paix dans le pays", a ajouté Joaquim do Espirito Santo, précisant que les troupes pourraient être sur place en décembre. Mais aucune précision sur l'effectif du contingent angolais n'a été communiquée.

Vendredi déjà, Manuel Vicente, vice-président angolais, qui représente son pays à la 69e Assemblée générale des Nations unies organisée jusqu'au 3 octobre à New-York, avait fait des déclarations dans ce sens. Et le 29 septembre, dans son discours devant l'Assemblée générale des Nations unies, il a même promis une "contribution effective à la paix et à la sécurité dans le monde" si son pays était élu membre non-permanent au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, une position convoitée depuis longtemps par l'Angola.

Changement de cap

Il s'agit là d'un changement de cap dans la politique extérieure pratiquée par l'Angola ces dernières années. Jusqu'à présent, le pays, deuxième producteur de pétrole du continent derrière le Nigeria, limitait son action à une aide humanitaire, financière, voire de la formation militaire, refusant catégoriquement l'envoi de troupes.

La participation à la Minusca constituera donc une première dans l'histoire de l'Angola qui n'avait pas, jusqu'ici, pris part à aucune opération de maintien de la paix de l'ONU dans le monde.

Même si dans le passé, l'armée angolaise était déjà intervenue hors de ses frontières, notamment au Zaïre devenu la RDC. En 1997, le président angolais avait en effet envoyé des troupes pour aider la rébellion qui marchait sur Kinshasa afin de renverser le maréchal Mobutu et ainsi favoriser l'accession au pouvoir de Laurent-Désiré Kabila. L'année suivante, il renvoyait un contingent pour soutenir Kabila menacé par les forces rwandaises qui, pourtant, l'avait aidé l'année précédente à renverser Mobutu au sein d'une coalition régionale qui, outre l'Angola, comptait notamment l'Ouganda et le Zimbabwe.

En 1997, l'Angola avait également envoyé au Congo-Brazzaville des forces en soutien aux miliciens de Denis Sassou Nguesso, entraînant le renversement de Pascal Lissouba, président élu en 1992 après l'instauration du multipartisme.

EU extends CAR mission

Source : Reuters

Brussels, 1 October 2014 - European Union envoys have agreed in principle to extend the mandate of an EU peacekeeping force in Central African Republic by three months to allow more time for the transition to a United Nations force, EU diplomats said on Tuesday.

The decision to extend the mission, until mid-March 2015, was taken by EU member state diplomats meeting in the EU's Political and Security Committee. The decision still needs ministerial approval, likely to be given at the next foreign ministers' meeting on October 20.

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An “anti-balaka” Christian militia took up arms in Central African Republic last year in response to months of looting and killing by mostly Muslim Seleka rebels after they toppled President Francois Bozize and seized power in March 2013.

France sent 2 000 troops to Central African Republic to help 6 000 African Union peacekeepers restore order.

In response to appeals by President Francois Hollande for more European support, the 28-nation EU agreed in January also to send a peacekeeping force, numbering around 850 soldiers. The force was initially authorised until mid-December.

The United Nations took over the African Union peacekeeping mission this month and plans to roughly double the force to about 12 000 troops.

France had pushed for the extension of the EU mission to allow more time for the UN peacekeeping force to settle in and because the presence of the EU force in the capital frees up French troops to patrol the countryside.

Angola: Over Thirty Former Angolan Refugees Return Home from Congo Brazzaville

Source: Angola Press

21 September 2014 - Cabinda: About twelve families of former Angolan refugees in the Republic of the Congo voluntarily repatriated to the country, having arrived in the national territory last Saturday, through the border post of Massabi, in the framework of the voluntary repatriation process.

The operation, which involved a total of 36 Angolan citizens, was made possible through the involvement of the Angolan government and the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

All the former refugees settled in the northern province of Cabinda.

The vice governor of Cabinda for political and social matters, Vítor do Espírito Santo, who chaired the ceremony, welcomed the former refugees and assured them that conditions have been created to ensure the social reintegration of the newly arrived citizens.

On the spot, the former refugees received the first medical assistance, which included vaccination against preventable diseases.

Heads may roll in Brazzaville

Source: West Africa Newsletter

24 September 2014 - Denis Sassou Nguesso could carry out a major government reshuffle on his return from the US, where he attended the Climate Change summit and the 69th United

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Nations general assembly at the end of September. The Republic of Congo leader has expressed growing concern about slipping standards and the increasingly ostentatious lifestyles of some government members.