



**American Friends
Service Committee**



**FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL LEGISLATION**

November 7, 2008
Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington DC, 20520

Dear Secretary Rice,

We are deeply concerned about the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's North Kivu province. As you know, the recent surge in violence, sparked by fighting between the CNDP rebel forces, local militias, and the DR Congo's national army, has displaced tens of thousands and led to widespread killings, looting, and distressing human rights abuses, including sexual and gender based violence.

We are alarmed by the lack of humanitarian access to the tens of thousands of Congolese civilians who fled the recent violence and the continued insecurity that has led to the re-evacuation of many aid groups working to assist them. While U.N. agencies stepped up efforts to deliver assistance earlier this week, tens of thousands of civilians are still without shelter, and many lack access to food and clean water.

While the cease-fire is holding in Goma, reports indicate fighting has resumed in other parts of North Kivu. U.S. resources and attention from the most senior levels are needed urgently to protect civilians and prevent a further escalation of the crisis.

In coordination with ongoing diplomatic efforts by the newly appointed U.N. special envoy, the French, British, and engaged African countries, and building on Assistant Secretary Jendayi E. Frazer's recent visit to Kinshasa, we urge you to:

- Appeal to all armed actors to immediately cease hostilities.
- Prevail on all parties to allow unfettered access for humanitarian relief assistance to civilians who have been forced to flee their homes and communities.
- Urge all countries to halt the supply of weapons to armed parties.
- Persuade all armed groups in North Kivu to fully participate in the comprehensive disengagement plan, including the separation of forces and brassage processes.
- Support the convened negotiations in Nairobi to include all actors in order to review their responsibilities under previously signed agreements, notably the November 2007 Nairobi Communiqué and the January 2008 Goma Peace Accords.
- Work with Security Council Members, the U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UN member countries to improve the capacity of the U.N.'s

- peacekeeping operation in the DRC (MONUC) to better protect civilians and create space for the provision of humanitarian assistance.
- Increase efforts to find long-term and non-military solutions in the eastern DRC, including an increase in civilian capacities on the ground to undertake important work in areas such as community policing, justice and reconciliation, and broad-based development.

Fighting and unspeakable atrocities have continued in the DRC for far too long. Promoting a sustainable peace, protecting civilians, and providing humanitarian relief can be achieved with these recommended steps. We appreciate your immediate attention and support your leadership role in addressing the urgent crisis in Congo.

Sincerely,



Mary Ellen McNish
General Secretary
American Friends Service Committee



Joe Volk
Executive Secretary
Friends Committee on National Legislation (Quakers)

CC: Assistant Secretary Jendayi E. Frazer, Africa Bureau, US State Department