

**Mahama, on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

**MEMORANDUM OF CONGOLESE REFUGEES IN RWANDA ON THEIR REPATRIATION  
TO THE DRC**

- To the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, H.E. Sir Keir Starmer,  
**In London**
- To the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, H.E. Olaf Scholz,  
**In Berlin**
- To the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the European Union, H.E. Jean-Noël Barrot,  
**In Brussels, Belgium**
- To the Representative of the UN Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Haung Xia
- To the Special Envoy of the African Union for the Great Lakes Region
- To the Special Envoy of the King of Belgium for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Stéphane Doppagne
- To the Special Envoy of the United States for the Great Lakes Region, Dr. J. Peter Pham
- To the Facilitator of the Nairobi Peace Process, Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta,

**All in Nairobi, Kenya**

- To the Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Ndèye Aissatou Masseck Ndiaye
- To the Ambassador of the European Union, Ms. Belene Calvo
- To the Ambassador of Germany, Ms. Heike Uta Dettmann
- To the Ambassador of the United Kingdom (UK), Ms. Alison Thorpe
- To the Ambassador of France, Mr. Antoine Anfré
- To the Ambassador of the United States, Mr. Eric W. Kneedler
- To the Ambassador of Sweden, Mr. Mikael Lindvall, Chargé d’Affaires a.i.,

**All in Kigali, Rwanda**

- To the Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

**In Kampala, Uganda**

- To the Representative of the European Union for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Johan Borgstam,

**In Brussels, Belgium**

- To the Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms. Angèle Dikongué-Atangana,

**In Kinshasa, DRC**

- To the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- To the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

**Both in Geneva**

**Subject: Grievance of Congolese Tutsi refugees living in refugee camps in the Great Lakes countries, particularly in Rwanda**

We, Congolese Tutsi refugees, citizens of the DRC, residing in various refugee camps in the Great Lakes region, particularly in Rwanda, address this memorandum to you in accordance with the Universal

Declaration of Human Rights of 1948<sup>1</sup>, the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities of 1992<sup>2</sup>, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of January 4, 1969, and the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

We, Congolese Tutsi refugees in Rwanda<sup>3</sup>, although initially relieved by the repatriation process initiated by the tripartite agreement (Congolese Government, Rwandan Government, and UNHCR) in May 2023 in Geneva, would like to draw your attention to the socio-political and security context currently prevailing in the DRC, particularly in the East, where we must be repatriated to our areas of origin.

In fact, we, Congolese Tutsi refugees, were pleased to read the statement issued on June 16, 2023, by the DRC Minister of the Interior, *"calling on all IGAD member states, and even more to the international community, to join efforts in addressing **the root causes** of the recurrent displacement of populations and to propose lasting solutions as a guarantee of social peace and the development of our respective states."*<sup>4</sup>

However, it is undeniable that hate speech, exclusion, and incitement to violence against Congolese Tutsis are among the root causes of instability in eastern DRC. The paradox is that the very same hate speech that forced thousands of Congolese Tutsis into exile continues to be propagated in the DRC by government officials, political leaders, journalists, and civil society actors. This rhetoric fuels crimes with genocidal intent, carried out by radicalized compatriots, anti-Tutsi local militias, and the FDLR, who use it as an ideological motivation for systematic attacks against members of the Congolese Tutsi community in North and South Kivu provinces.

Even worse, these local militias and the FDLR receive support, supplies, arms, and maintenance from the Congolese government under the official status of *"National Reserve Army, the FARDC,"* commonly known as *"Wazalendo,"* who are part of the RAD (*"Réserve de la Défense Armée"*).

As a reminder, since the announcement of the "Tripartite Talks on the Repatriation of Congolese Tutsi Refugees to the DRC" by the President of the DRC at the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva on February 27, 2023<sup>5</sup>, and the confirmation on May 13, 2023, by the Congolese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Christophe Lutundula, stating that a **"thorough screening will be conducted to identify Congolese refugees in Rwanda who must return to the DRC"**,<sup>6</sup> the situation has remained contradictory.

Paradoxically, the Congolese government continues to radicalize civilians and its own armed groups, known as the Wazalendo, through debate programs aired on national television, particularly on RTNC

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<sup>1</sup> Article 15: "Everyone has the right to a nationality. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of their nationality nor denied the right to change their nationality."

<sup>2</sup> Article 1: States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.

<sup>3</sup> D'autres réfugiés congolais sont maintenant plus de 25 ans (vingt-cinq) dans les camps des réfugiés de la Tanzanie, Ouganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Ethiopie, Burundi, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Communiqué of 16 June 2023, p.2

<sup>5</sup> [Réfugiés Congolais et Rwandais: Félix Tshisekedi a demandé la tenue "urgente" d'une tripartite RDC-Rwanda-HCR pour le rapatriement des ressortissants de deux pays | Actualite.cd](#)

<sup>6</sup> [RDC: début lundi des travaux sur le rapatriement des réfugiés congolais basés au Rwanda | Actualite.cd](#)

(Radio-Télévision Nationale Congolaise) under the theme "30 years is enough." In these broadcasts, Congolese officials spread hate speech and exclusionary rhetoric against Congolese Tutsis, falsely claiming that these so-called refugees "do not even know their villages in Kivu," thus fueling suspicions and encouraging the perception that they are **"Rwandan foreigners."**<sup>7</sup>

Other political leaders close to the regime continue to deny the existence of Congolese refugees in Rwanda, with some describing them as ***"a people who are only there to repopulate the lands of the DRC with the aim of balkanization"***<sup>8</sup>. In addition, there has been a rise in hate speech, propagated by civil society actors, citizen movements (Lucha RDC, FILIMBI, VERANDA MUTSHANGA, etc.)<sup>9</sup>, and members of the ruling party. Such is the case of UDPS officials José Mbenza who declared on April 20, 2023, on a popular local channel in Kinshasa called Congo Buzz<sup>10</sup>, that ***"by definition, Tutsis are bloodthirsty, while calling on Congolese people to arm themselves to get rid of this sentiment in DRC..."*** Three days later, on April 23, 2023, another UDPS official, Joël Kitenge, referred to ***Tutsis as a 'bomb'***<sup>11</sup>. This rhetoric is accompanied by accusations of *infiltration*, which continuously expose Congolese Tutsis to various forms of popular retaliation as in the Congolese collective imagination, the term "infiltration" is often associated with Tutsis.

This rhetoric has been repeatedly echoed by DRC President Félix Tshisekedi, notably during the visit of Swiss President Alain Berset in a press conference on April 13, 2023, in Kinshasa<sup>12</sup>. During his 2023 electoral campaign, he further stated that ***"they will gradually eliminate infiltrators,"***<sup>13</sup> referring to Rwandophones as traitors and accusing ***"Kinyarwanda Speaking soldiers within the FARDC of weakening the security organs."***<sup>14</sup>

On April 20, 2023, the Congolese National Assembly unanimously passed a law on the armed forces reservist, thereby officially recognizing local militias known as **"Wazalendo"** as **"reservists,"** without considering their numerous human rights abuses in Kivu. Many of these militias including Nyatura, Yakutumba, APCLS, Kabido, NDC-Rénové, Kibukila, Ebuela Mutetezi, Biloze Bishambuke, Mutomboki, Malaika, among others have been responsible for systematic attacks against Congolese Tutsi populations in Kivu.

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<sup>7</sup> (773) #RDC 30 ans, ça suffit ! Attitude de la communauté internationale - YouTube

<sup>8</sup> Ntambwe Eliezer, National Parliamentary, member of the Union Sacrée, on April 18, 2023, in an ordinary session, called on the Government to be vigilant, asserting that Congolese refugees in Rwanda are only a means of repopulating Congolese lands for balkanization, as they are not Congolese: [MAISHA RDC sur Twitter : "#KINSHASA\\_RDC: 'Ils n'existent pas des réfugiés congolais au RWANDA...ils ne veulent que repeupler nos terres pour la balkanisation'. Dép Nat @EliezerNtambwe0 initiateur de la campagne 'DERWANDALISATION des services de sécurité'.\(19/04/023\).1 @USAmbDRC @WairimuANderitu @Le\\_HCR https://t.co/OkaDDcI2Bk" / Twitter](#)

<sup>9</sup> "There are no Congolese Tutsi refugees in Rwanda. These are Rwandan populations that Kigali wants to settle in Kivu to infiltrate DRC institutions and occupy the lands of the indigenous people." declared Bienvenu Matumo, a leader of the citizen movement LUCHA RDC (Lutte pour le Changement).

<sup>10</sup> [MAISHA RDC sur Twitter : "#KINSHASA\\_cd: Maintenant 3jours que John MBENZA a qualifié les 'Tutsis des sanguinaires, en appelant à s'armer pour se débarrasser d'eux'. Cadre de #UDPS, aucun communiqué de son parti ni @fabricepuela @kazadi peter pour condamner ces propos d'incitation à la haine. @MinJusticeRDC https://t.co/YH4vpWxvPW" / Twitter](#)

<sup>11</sup> <https://twitter.com/MaishaRdc/status/1650175483512868867?s=20>

<sup>12</sup> <https://twitter.com/StanysBujakera/status/1646476606641250305?t=IqrYp9xshBxbMv-C7DRj2Q&s=19>

<sup>13</sup> <https://x.com/MaishaRdc/status/1843820260241354977?t=ANehitr6TW7x1XX5xjwDXA&s=19>

<sup>14</sup> [Félix Tshisekedi, président de la RDC : « Le Rwanda n'est pas seul responsable des malheurs du Congo » \(lemonde.fr\)](#), et [Félix Tshisekedi : « C'est l'armée de Kagame qui se bat chez nous » - Le Soir](#)

In North Kivu, Mai-Mai militias from South Kivu with the support of others found in North Kivu have reinforced their coalition with FDLR and Burundian armed forces, systematically targeting members of the Congolese Tutsi community in Masisi, Nyiragongo, Kalehe, territories.

In October 2023, the Wazalendo armed groups, together with FDLR, supported by Burundian forces, the FARDC, and European mercenaries, systematically attacked Congolese Tutsi villages in Masisi territory, killing hundreds of Tutsi cattle herders, with others reported missing. They slaughtered cattle, by cutting the tendons of some, and looted others, declaring that they *"would not lay down their arms until the last Tutsi get back in Rwanda."*<sup>15</sup> These cruel events were even documented by the UN Group of Experts in their December 2023 report.<sup>16</sup>

At moment, more than a hundred Congolese Tutsi cattle herders have been killed, others remain missing<sup>17</sup>, and over **250,000** cows have been looted by Wazalendo Reservists (Mai-Mai) in coalition with the FDLR. Additionally, more than **10,000** Congolese Tutsis have fled their villages in Masisi, Kalehe, Nyiragongo, and Rutshuru to Uganda and Rwanda due to persecution based on their ethnic identity and appearance.

Acts of lynching and even cannibalism against Congolese Tutsis both civilians and soldiers have been carried out by youth vigilante groups initiated by the Congolese government, alongside Wazalendo militias mixed with the FDLR.

These atrocities should prompt the European Union and its partners to take concrete measures to ensure that the Congolese government protects members of the Congolese Tutsi community. Instead, Congolese officials, including President Félix Tshisekedi, continue to glorify the perpetrators, calling them **"patriots, heroes, or guardians of DRC's sovereignty"**<sup>18</sup> each time they commit such acts by filming themselves committing atrocities, undermining human dignity and making a spectacle of their cannibalistic actions within the socio-political and security environment of the DRC.

The debate that National parliamentary JUSTIN BITAKWIRA, along with several Congolese elites, continue to organize in Kinshasa's academic institutions in support of pseudo-researcher ONANA spreading hate-filled pogroms against Congolese Tutsis, reinforce our belief that the Congolese government's ultimate goal is to see its territory free of Congolese Tutsis<sup>19</sup>. Even worse, the same parliamentary, who is sanctioned by the UN for repeated ethnic hate speech, has recently been tasked by the President of the DRC, the Minister of Defense, and the Minister of Interior with the mission of

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<sup>15</sup> General IGNACE SAULI DUNIA, of the NYATURA Militia, closely affiliated with the FDLR, declared in October 2023 while they were burning Congolese Tutsi villages in Kibarizo, Burungu, Petit Masisi, Shangi... that they would lay down their arms until the last Tutsi was in Rwanda.

<sup>16</sup> [documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n23/364/38/pdf/n2336438.pdf](https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n23/364/38/pdf/n2336438.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Some Tutsi cattle herders are held in FDLR headquarters and Wazalendo (reservists).

<sup>18</sup> The President of the DRC, Félix TSHISEKEDI on France 24, (773) Félix Tshisekedi : "Je n'ai aucune leçon à recevoir de Moïse Katumbi" • FRANCE 24 - YouTube, called the wazalendo, patriots who defend the interests of their communities, although these armed groups wazalendo in October 2023 had just committed the most horrible crimes against the Tutsis in the territory of Masisi. [n2336438.pdf\(un.org\)](https://n2336438.pdf(un.org))

<sup>19</sup> (773) Procès ONANA KAGAME : JUSTIN BITAKWIRA " LE PRÉSIDENT TSHISEKEDI DOIT FERMER L'AMBASSADE De FRANCE - YouTube

***“reorganizing all Mai-Mai armed groups hostile to Congolese Tutsis, operating in the high and middle plateaus of South Kivu.”<sup>20</sup>***

***To this extent, we Congolese Tutsi refugees in Rwanda, could we ask ourselves how these local militias, now government self-defense units, are going to protect us once repatriated to the DRC, especially as they are intent on exterminating all Tutsis in the DRC, whom they describe as “invaders, usurpers of Congolese nationality, illegal intruder of land in Kivu, conspirators of balkanization, snakes and so on”?***

It is widely known that the majority of these militias have formed alliances with the FDLR in their awful campaign against the existence of Congolese Tutsis in Kivu. Yet, the Congolese government, after officially recognizing these militias as ***“reliable and necessary security partners”***, has shown no intention of dismantling or repatriating the FDLR to Rwanda despite the FDLR’s key role in driving Congolese Tutsis into exile in neighboring countries.

It is in this regard that we urgently call your attention to the ongoing arbitrary arrests of Tutsis by Congolese security forces. Currently, ***over 300 Tutsis have been identified in Makala Prison in Kinshasa and Munzeze Prison in Goma, detained solely based on their Tutsi facial features and ethnic identity. They are being held in inhumane and degrading conditions.*** Genocidal killings perpetrated by local “Reservist” militias, including the FDLR, with the backing of the FARDC, Burundian defense forces, and European mercenaries in Kivu, have forced Congolese Tutsis to flee their villages and abandon their property.

These grave concerns must be carefully considered by the European Union when reviewing the repatriation process of Congolese Tutsis, to prevent their return to certain slaughter. Instead, a thorough examination of the root causes of instability in Eastern DRC is essential. Currently, over 8,000 newly displaced Congolese Tutsis without official refugee status are stranded in transit sites in Nkamira and Mahama, in Northern and Eastern Rwanda.

We strongly believe that any repatriation of Congolese Tutsi refugees into this environment of impunity, hate speech, incitement to genocide, and the mobilization of Mai-Mai and FDLR militias would constitute a flagrant violation of the 1951 International Convention on the Status of Refugees.

### **CONTEXT: THE CURRENT SITUATION IN EASTERN DRC**

Since early January 2025, clashes have erupted between the Wazalendo armed groups, the FDLR, Burundian defense forces, SADC forces, mercenaries, and the M23 in the territories of Masisi, Kalehe, Nyiragongo, and Goma. Unfortunately, members of the Congolese Tutsi community continue to be targeted by government-backed armed groups, labeling them as “enemies, infiltrators, or traitors,” leading to arbitrary arrests, killings, and forced to exile.

One such case is **Kavunjo Janvier**, a Congolese Tutsi resident of Ngungu in Masisi, who was killed on January 14, 2025, by Wazalendo militias in coalition with Burundian forces and the FARDC when they retreated from the area, leaving it under M23 control. As they withdrew toward Nyabibwe and its

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<sup>20</sup> [\(773\) JUSTIN BITAKWIRA na WAZALENDU WOTE WASUD KIVU, KWENYE MEZA YAMAZUNGUMUZO, ADUI LAZIMA ACHAPWE - YouTube](#)

neighboring villages in South Kivu, Congolese Tutsi residents were captured by the same perpetrators, publicly tortured, and some forcibly disappeared under accusations of being "**foreign Rwandans.**"

Meanwhile, the Minister of the Interior of South Kivu Province, a provincial parliamentary and former FARDC officer, has been actively recruiting youth to join the Wazalendo armed groups, using an anti-Rwandan nationalist rhetoric. This poses a severe risk of escalating attacks against Congolese Tutsis, particularly the Banyamulenge community in this region.

Before the fall of Goma, four Congolese Tutsi were captured; one was shot dead by Wazalendo and FARDC forces, while others were lynched and burned. Notable cases include:

- Michée Rukundo, who fled the fighting in Minova and sought refuge in Nzulo on January 17, 2025, but was captured on January 22, 2025, by local youth in complicity with Wazalendo forces. He was lynched and his body burned.
- On January 25, 2025, two other young men, Munyabarenzi Jonas and Niyonzima Joseph, were taken from their homes in Mugunga, 15 km from Goma, by Wazalendo elements and the FARDC. They were shot dead, and their bodies were burned and shred by the local population in the presence of SADC forces and MONUSCO personnel who failed to intervene.
- On January 26, 2025, NSABIMANA Aroni, a young Congolese Tutsi from Turunga, Nyiragongo, was pulled off a motorcycle by Wazalendo group and shot him to death. His body was handed over to locals for public lynching.
- On the same day, Madame GASHEKA Aimérance, another Congolese Tutsi, was taken from her home in the Kituku neighborhood by Wazalendo and FARDC soldiers who took her and left with her for an unknown destination.
- On January 25, 2025, two Congolese Tutsi police officers, MUGISHA Daniel and BYIRINGIRO, were captured near Keshero while trying to hide. They were executed at close range by FARDC and Wazalendo forces, then their bodies were desecrated due to their Tutsi identity. Additionally, nine Congolese Tutsi were arrested at the ACOGENOKI displaced persons site, accused by military intelligence of planning to join M23 if Goma fell.

We must remind you that on **August 17, 2024, Manirakiza Seruvumbu**, a Congolese Tutsi from Kalehe and a small trader in Fizi, South Kivu, was murdered by Wazalendo group. His body was burned and eat him in presence of local authorities, who failed to act, despite the perpetrators recording and disseminating the act.

Despite the severity of these crimes, the Congolese judicial system has failed to conduct investigations, and international bodies, including the UN, the EU, the USA and their partners ***have not prioritized the persecution of Congolese Tutsis as a humanitarian crisis.***

This is also to remind that Since 2022, more than 1,500 Congolese Tutsi displaced persons in the ACOGENOKI camp in Kyeshero have been deprived of humanitarian aid and have received no visits from international agencies such as the EU, UN, USA, etc. A report from the **North Kivu local government on April 18, 2024**, documented all displacement sites in the province, ***except the one sheltering Congolese Tutsis***, effectively erasing their plight from official records.

Similarly, on April 13, 2024, displaced Congolese Tutsis from Bwiza in Rutshuru who had fled systematic attacks in Masisi in October 2023 were targeted by Nyatura militias in coalition with the FDLR, resulting in multiple killings under the pretext that they were "allies of M23." The attack was



claimed by Jules Mulumba (real name: Habyarimana Mbitsemunda), spokesperson for the CMC/Nyatura (Wazalendo group) and VDP (volontaires pour la défense de la patrie),). These displaced Congolese Tutsis kept calling on the international community to come to their rescue, but in no case their situation has interested the humanity or the international community as a whole.

Tens of thousands of Congolese Tutsis remain in refugee camps across the Great Lakes region, particularly in Rwanda, since 1994, due to systematic attacks by local militias and the FDLR in eastern DRC. Their Congolese nationality is continuously questioned by Congolese officials, who label them as *"foreign Rwandans"* and accuse *Kigali of attempting to resettle them in Kivu to replace indigenous populations*. Even President Félix Tshisekedi has propagated these narratives in his address to Parliament<sup>21</sup>, fully aware that his government is mobilizing, reorganizing, and arming anti-Tutsi militias, alongside the FDLR, the FARDC, Burundian defense forces, European mercenaries, and SADC troops, to carry out systematic attacks against Congolese Tutsis, forcing them into exile.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We, the Congolese Tutsi refugees, eager to be repatriated to our villages in Kivu, where our ancestors lived before borders were drawn and before the DRC became a "State, a country, or a Nation"; we would like the international community to show its solidarity by facilitating the:

- ✚ Repatriation of all the FDLR from DRC to their country of origine (RWANDA) and condemn those who are accused for crime against the population in DRC especially the Tutsi community
- ✚ Identification of European Union member states whose citizens are engaged in mercenaries in Eastern DRC (fully known by the international community), supporting the FARDC, Wazalendo militias, and the FDLR (*who perpetrated the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda and continue to spread genocidal anti-Tutsi ideology among civilian populations and local militias in Eastern DRC*). Additionally, expose other foreign armies involved in committing war crimes, crimes against humanity, and acts of genocide against members of the Congolese Tutsi community, in violation of EU laws and UN conventions on the matter.

In light of the numerous voices rising from all corners to express international solidarity with the DRC, particularly in its eastern region, to the extent of threatening sanctions against "actors accused of stirring up tensions in Eastern DRC," we would like, in the same spirit, to awaken the conscience of humanity and the international community through all its partners for taking into account the issue of the persecution of Congolese Tutsis as a major humanitarian concern by sanctioning state and non-state actors in the DRC, as well as regional states that:

- ✚ Encourage and promote hate speech and incitement to violence against Congolese Tutsis in the DRC, leading to acts of anthropophagy against members of this Congolese Tutsi community;
- ✚ Mobilize, reorganize, and arm anti-Tutsi local militias and the FDLR, supported by European mercenaries and foreign armed forces, including those from Burundi and SADC who carry out systematic attacks against Congolese Tutsis, obstructing the repatriation process of Congolese Tutsi refugees, who have now spent 30 years in refugee camps across the Great Lakes region, as well as others residing in Europe and the USA.

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<sup>21</sup> [Kigali dément un "repeuplement" dans l'est de la RDC – DW – 13/12/2024](#)

Taking such action would demonstrate an inclusive international solidarity that would further contribute to the stability of Eastern DRC and the Great Lakes region, particularly by fostering reconciliation among local communities and regional nations.

Considering these recommendations would address the primary cause of instability in Eastern DRC and the Great Lakes region by discouraging certain states from legitimizing and enabling violence by armed groups against specific communities based on their ethnicity and appearance justified under the pretext of defending sovereignty or territorial integrity. Such actions aim to render Congolese Tutsis "**stateless**," dispossessing them of their ancestral lands in Kivu, in blatant violation of their fundamental rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Moreover, this directly contravenes Article 51, paragraph 2 of the DRC Constitution, which guarantees the protection of ethnic minorities: "**...It also ensures the protection and promotion of vulnerable groups and all minorities.**"

Sincerely, thank you.

**The representatives of the refugees living in Rwanda.**

Name: **TURENGE BIRIKO Prospère**

Refugee camps: **MAHAMA**

Signature: 


Name: **MANIRAGABA Bosco**

Refugee camps: **NYABIHEKE**

Signature: 

Name: **NSENGAMUNGU Abel**

Refugee camps: **KIZIBA**

Signature: 

Name: **MUNYAKARAMBI SEBUTOZI Edson**

Refugee camps: **KIGEME**

Signature: 

Name: **RWAGOSORA Aimé**

Refugee camps: **MUGOMBWA**

Signature: 