



Washington, D.C March 16, 2025

Mr. Marco Rubio  
U.S. Secretary of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

CC: • Mr. James E. Risch, U.S. Senator (ID), Chairman, U.S. Foreign Relations Committee  
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510  
• Rep. Brian Mast, Chairman of House Committee on Foreign Affairs.  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515

**Subject: Urgent Call for Action to Protect the Tutsi/Banyamulenge Ethnic Group in Eastern D.R. Congo**

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We, the members of ISÔKO\_USA and the Mahoro Peace Association—U.S.-based nonprofit organizations representing American citizens of Banyamulenge and Tutsi heritage—write to urgently bring to your attention the escalating crisis in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

As American citizens of Congolese origin, we are deeply grateful for the refuge and opportunities the United States has provided after many of us were forced to flee persecution, statelessness, and mass violence in our homeland. We have lost loved ones, livelihoods, and even legal recognition as Congolese citizens due to targeted ethnic discrimination. The violence against our people has roots in the genocidal ideologies that emerged following the 1994 Rwandan genocide, fueling mass killings, forced displacement, and the destruction of entire communities.

**Ongoing Atrocities Against Tutsi and Banyamulenge Populations**

Today, these crimes persist at an alarming rate. Individuals of Tutsi appearance are being stoned, lynched, and even cannibalized by mobs incited by hate speech from Congolese officials and media. Entire villages have been burned to the ground, hundreds of thousands of cattle—our community's economic lifeline—have been looted, and thousands of innocent people have been killed or exiled into refugee camps in Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, and beyond.

We have repeatedly raised our concerns with U.S. officials, including President Biden, former Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and members of Congress, urging them to hold the DRC government accountable for its role in supporting extremist militias, including the genocidal

Rwandan FDLR. These local and foreign armed groups have openly declared their intent to eradicate the Tutsi population from its ancestral lands in eastern DRC.

Since 2017, the situation has worsened dramatically. In South Kivu, the Banyamulenge community has been under siege by a coalition of militias, often supported by elements of the Congolese armed forces (FARDC). These groups have:

- Destroyed over 85% of Banyamulenge villages
- Looted and sold approximately 500,000 cattle
- Killed over 5,000 people
- Forcibly displaced thousands into refugee camps or exile

Despite extensive documentation from international organizations, including the United Nations, these crimes continue with impunity.

Most recently, we are gravely concerned about aerial bombings by the DRC government targeting unarmed civilians and public infrastructure in Minembwe, leaving the population traumatized and economic activity paralyzed. This is the worst humanitarian crisis in the region since 2017.

### **Our Urgent Requests to the U.S. Government.**

1. Facilitating humanitarian assistance to at-risk minority groups, including Banyamulenge in South Kivu, Tutsis in North Kivu, and Hema in Ituri Province.
2. Pressuring the DRC government to engage in diplomacy and negotiate with all political and military actors, including the M23 rebel group, to end the conflict.
3. Addressing the root causes of this crisis, including the marginalization of Congolese Tutsis and the safe repatriation of refugees who have been forced into exile.

### **A History of Persecution**

Ethnic violence against Tutsis and Banyamulenge in the DRC has persisted for over six decades:

- 1961-1965: Large-scale ethnic cleansing against Banyarwanda (Hutu and Tutsi) followed Lumumba's assassination. Thousands were massacred or drowned in Lake Kivu.
- 1981-1989: Laws revoked citizenship and barred Tutsi and Banyamulenge from political participation.
- 1992-1996: Massacres, expulsion laws, and forced displacement targeted Tutsi populations.
- 1996-Present: The genocidal FDLR militia and other local armed groups have waged ongoing attacks, while the Congolese government fails to protect or reintegrate displaced refugees and repatriate refugees from neighboring countries.

## **Government-Sponsored Hate & Violence against Congolese Tutsis**

Instead of stopping these atrocities, the DRC government has fueled violence through hate speech and support for extremist militias like Wazalendo. Officials have made inflammatory remarks, further inciting genocidal violence.

Urgent U.S. Action Needed. We urge the U.S. government to:

1. Demand a ceasefire and hold the DRC accountable for war crimes
2. Facilitate dialogue between all conflict parties, including M23.
3. Stop incitement to violence and sanction officials promoting hate speech.
4. Support an international investigation into crimes against humanity.
5. Provide humanitarian aid to displaced Banyamulenge, Tusti and Hema communities.
6. Work with regional organizations to ensure the safe return and reinstallation of refugees.
7. Help repatriate FDLR militants to Rwanda to prevent further extremism in DRC.
8. Support transitional justice and reconciliation efforts for lasting peace.

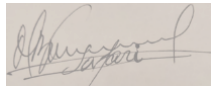
### **Conclusion**

The U.S. can help prevent another genocide in the great lakes region and bring lasting peace to the DRC by addressing the root causes of this endless conflict.

We appreciate your time and request a meeting to discuss this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Safari Munyarugendo,



President ISÔKO\_USA

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Adele Kibasumba,



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CC: All Senators on the Foreign Relations Committee

CC: All House Representatives on the Foreign Affairs Committee