

MEMORANDUM OF CONGOLESE TUTSI REFUGEES FROM RWANDA

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

All in Geneva.

- 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 European Union for the Great Lakes Region; Mr. Bernard Quintin;
- To the Special Envoy of the King of Belgium for the Region for the Great Lakes Region; Mr. Stéphane Doppagne;
- To the U.S. Special Envoy for the Region 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 Secretary General of the East African Community.

in Kigali, Rwanda.

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

in Kampala, Uganda

- To the European Union Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Johan Borgstam.

▪ **In Brussels, Belgium**

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Distinguished guests;

Representatives of the United Nations, the African Union, and the European Union;

Dear Ambassadors of different countries;

Representatives of the Government of Rwanda; present here.

"We remember fighting for justice, rights and repatriation"

Today, we are not gathered simply to cry.

We are gathered here to remember, to bear witness, and to refuse to forget. We remember those fathers, mothers, children, brothers and sisters who were massacred not by chance, but in a targeted way, because they were only Congolese Tutsis refugees in Mudende in Rwanda, Gatumba in Burundi, and others in Mushaki, Kamina, Kisangani, Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and in so many other localities of the Democratic Republic of Congo such as Ngungu and Mokoto in Masisi territory in North Kivu and today in Minembwe, in South Kivu.

This was not "collateral damage" of war. These constituted crimes against humanity, and in the case of some species, the crime of genocide, fed by hatred, orchestrated by exclusionary discourses, motivated by the intention of exterminating an entire community because of its facies and/or ethnicity.

These atrocities are not isolated. They are part of a long and tragic history of persecution:

From 1962 to 1994, the "Kanyarwanda War" aimed to eliminate the Tutsi communities. Then came other campaigns: Shenge-Hunde, Kyaghandanda-Nande, Magrivi-Hutu, the combatants or the bangilima.

It should be remembered that in 1964, because of their face and language, more than 1000 Congolese Tutsis were massacred in Kirotshu by coalition militias supported by segments of power.

Similarly, in 1993 with the appearance of the Bangilima militias, still supported by the Zairean government, thousands of Tutsis were killed, their herds slaughtered, and others systematically looted followed by a fire and destruction of all their homes in the territories of Masisi, Walikale, and Lubero.

- In 1994, when the ex-FAR and the Interahamwe, perpetrators of the genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda, crossed the border into the DRC, they continued this extermination project, targeting the Congolese Tutsis, and all those who have their own faces, forcing thousands of Congolese Tutsis into exile in the DRC's neighboring countries. In particular those who are testifying to you here, are the fruit of this genocidal ideology, which continues to be used to this day by our Government, the DRC, through the Wazalendo militias mixed with the FDLR, and the impunity enjoyed by the authors of anti-Tutsi hate speech, in particular Congolese military and political officials, such as General Ekenge of the FARDC, Muhindo Nzangi, Justin Bitakwaira, Julien Paluku Kahongya, Eliezer Ntambwe, Otto Bahizi, Justin Ndayishimiye, and some civil society actors, including citizen movements LUCHA DRC, FILIMBI, VERANDA MUTSHANGA, and etc.
- In 1995, in Mukoto Monastery, Ngungu, Masisi, Bwisha, and Bwito in Rutshuru, blood was shed again. Hundreds of Congolese Tutsis were massacred there by Interahamwes, ex-Far, today, under the FDLR label, in complicity with the ex-FAZ (the Zairian army), now the FARDC.

- From 1997 to 2004, the murders reached Kamina, Kisangani, Kinshasa, Mbuji-Mayi, Goma:

*In 1997, in Mudende, Rwanda, in a single refugee camp, 327 Congolese Tutsis were massacred in a single night by Interahamwe, ex-FAR, facilitated by the ex-FAZ.

*In 2004, Gatumba, in Burundi, became another cursed name in the memory of our people after the massacre of 166 people targeted and massacred because of their ethnic identity, the Tutsis or the Banyamulenge.

These places of Mudende and Gatumba are not just places. These are open wounds. Entire families have disappeared. Broken generations. Survivors live with visible and invisible scars, which time cannot heal.

And yet how many of these executioners still live free? How many speak in international forums? How many are comfortably installed in the institutions of the DRC and Burundi, while their hands are still covered in the blood of the Congolese Tutsis?

When the perpetrators of hate speech against the Tutsis in the DRC film themselves or pose for photos with the President of the DRC and Congolese government ministers, encouraging them for their work of incitement to hatred against the Tutsis, or when the warlords responsible for the systematic attacks against the Tutsis are received at the Presidency of the DRC by describing them as "patriots".

There is reason to alert you that "hatred against the Tutsis in the DRC has become a political project in the DRC" that helps to mobilize militias, or all Congolese institutions, and others in the region, such as those of Burundi, to make the "Congolese Tutsis a permanent target to be fought in all forms".

Here in this camp in Kiziba, like others in the region, we do not only have Congolese Tutsi refugees who fled around 1994, but others have come frankly fleeing attacks by the murderous Wazalendo, the FDLR, in coalition with the FARDC, the Burundian Armed Forces, and the SADC as well as the displaced people in the transit site of Nkamira.

We did not believe that in this century we could witness acts of cannibalism, desperately, the Congolese Tutsis in the DRC, they are lynched, burned and cannibalized by Wazalendo militias, supported by the Congolese and Burundian governments.

Such acts should not only shock the conscience of humanity but should call on everyone to act to say, and enough is enough. We must not make "Never Again", just a slogan, but it should be lived in the daily life of the "Congolese Tutsi victims", after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

We call on the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, the United States, and international human rights institutions to take a clear position not just in words, but in deeds. For justice deferred is justice denied. And when you protect the executioners, you injure the victims a second time.

We also raise our voices for the Congolese Tutsi refugees who have been living in exile for decades here in Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya and elsewhere. They deserve much more than oblivion. They deserve justice, the right of return, and the restoration of their dignity.

Even today, thousands of them live in precarious conditions:

- Barely 5,000 Rwandan francs per month per head for those with children;
- 3000 francs for unemployed adults ;
- Schools are overwhelmed, access to university is limited, medical care is inaccessible.

These conditions are not simply a humanitarian issue. They are a question of dignity. They are a question of rights. "Where justice is absent, peace is but a mirage. And where compassion is absent, humanity collapses. They say "Solidarity is not charity. It is the recognition that the other is my mirror: "His suffering obliges me. His exile concerns me. Its future is our responsibility.

On this day of remembrance, we do not ask for mercy. We demand recognition, justice and active compassion. And we call on all partners to join this moral and historic commitment to humanity, to the dignity of the Congolese Tutsis.

Since January 2025, several regions of North and South Kivu, now under the relative control of the AFC/M23, have experienced partial stabilization. However, this lull remains under constant threat from regular incursions by Wazalendo armed groups and the FDLR, acting under the tacit support of Congolese government forces.

These groups are targeting not only some members of the Congolese Tutsi community who have returned to their villages, but also those from other communities, guilty of having agreed to cohabit peacefully with the Tutsis. The attacks in Tambi, Kizimba and Kalehe in March, May and June 2025 bear witness to this. They reveal a systematic manhunt program, rooted in a hatred of identity that has lasted since the so-called "Kanyarwanda" war of the 1960s.

"When hatred becomes law, humanity falters and justice abdicates."

The recent abuse goes far beyond simple armed violence. There have been public lynchings, acts of cannibalism, mass arrests of more than 300 Congolese Tutsis, detained in inhumane conditions in the various dungeons and prisons in the DRC, solely because of their ethnic identity. Their herds pay the price.

Now, more than 500,000 heads of cattle have already disappeared. Some were slaughtered, others cut their tendons, and several were looted by the Wazalendo, FDLR, FARDC, FNDB and sold in public markets under the eye of the state authorities, who even collect taxes.

These acts are part of a context marked by the growing dissemination of hate speech targeting Tutsis, used as instruments of political and military mobilization.

Political leaders, certain civil society actors such as Lucha, Wazalendo militias, FDLR combatants, elements of the FARDC, the National Defense Forces of Burundi (FNDB), as well as representatives of the State, have, at various levels, relayed discourses stigmatizing the Congolese Tutsi community, in the name of defending the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The entitled "Congolais Telema", broadcast on the Congolese National Radio and Television (RTNC), which contribute to the propagation of hostile messages against the Tutsis. These programmed

broadcast remarks that equate the Tutsi with foreign interests in a generalized manner, thus fueling a climate of suspicion, discrimination and hostility.

This rhetoric is reminiscent of the role played by the Radio-Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM) in Rwanda before and during the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994, due to the use of the media to disseminate messages of hatred, stigmatization and dehumanization.

For example, a FARDC general, formerly a FARDC spokesman by the name of General Sylvain Ekenge, intervened in one of these programs by publicly describing Tutsi women as "treacherous", a statement that contributes to essentializing and stigmatizing a category of people solely based on their ethnicity.

"It's not the difference that kills, but the ideology that teaches us to make it a threat."

While the UN, after the 1994 genocide against Tutsis in Rwanda, adopted the oath of "Never again", it is legitimate to ask what is the purpose of MONUSCO when it not only remains passive in the face of documented crimes, but it supports an army integrating the FDLR and the Wazalendo militias, the very perpetrators of the violence against the Congolese Tutsis?

In January 2023, in SHANGI, Masisi territory, an act of unspeakable brutality was committed. Mrs. UWERA Grace was captured, beheaded by elements of the FDLR and the Nyatura.

Before murdering her, her executioners cut off her breasts and mutilated her genitals, justifying this cruelty by the desire to prevent her from giving birth to a Tutsi child.

This mother left behind two children who are now refugees in Mahama, Rwanda, cared for as best she can by their grandmother, who has no resources to ensure their survival and their future.

Other young Congolese Tutsi men were kidnapped from farms, also mutilated in a targeted manner. Their genitals are always severed under the same pretext: to prevent them from procreating, from engendering life within their community. More alarmingly, these atrocities were sometimes committed in the presence or with the passivity of FARDC elements, who neither protected the victims nor prevented the crimes.

These acts are not simple war violence, but reflect an active genocidal ideology, fueled by a deep ethnic hatred against the Congolese Tutsis.

Here, in Kiziba, as elsewhere, each survivor carries within him a story of suffering: If he was not himself a direct victim, he saw a loved one succumb to it.

In October 2023, the deadly attack on the village of Nturo in Masisi by Congolese Tutsis who had returned since 2006-2007 is also a perfect illustration of this.

For three days, the FDLR, Wazalendo, FARDC and Burundian troops burned down the village of Nturo, killing innocent Congolese Tutsi civilians, others kidnapped, missing until this point, cows slaughtered, and others looted, without MONUSCO intervening, despite repeated warnings from the Congolese Tutsi community.

The memory of these crimes must be questioned. It demands justice, recognition and action. To remain silent is to become complicit in a logic of extermination which, even today, continues to perpetuate itself in silence.

While billions of dollars have been invested each year to maintain the refugees in the camps for 31 years now, they live on barely 3,000 Rwandan francs a month, in chronic poverty.

Meanwhile, the UN, through its mission in the DRC, MONUSCO, continues to support the FARDC, which collaborates with the executioners (FDLR and Wazalendo) of the refugees.

"No one is born to live, grow up and die in a refugee camp."

This logic of prolonged camp management as a lasting response to a political and security problem is a structural injustice. It reinforces the idea that some people are destined for eternal wandering, while others build their future on the ruins of their exile.

The time has come to put an end to the illusion of a protracted humanitarian solution, and to launch a sincere, structured and secure process of voluntary return of Congolese Tutsi refugees, in dignity by:

The establishment of a return program coordinated and monitored by the international community, in collaboration with the Congolese government, but excluding actors involved in abuses against Congolese Tutsis; International protection of ethnic minorities in the DRC, with targeted sanctions against those responsible for hate speech and acts; Profound reform of MONUSCO so that it stops supporting an army subservient to anti-Tutsi militias via the Congolese army; Establishment of transitional justice mechanisms, to ensure the recognition of crimes committed and non-repetition.

"No lasting peace can be born on mass graves or built on injustice."

We thank the governments of Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and other countries for their hospitality in the face of the plight of those fleeing. We commend UNHCR and humanitarian NGOs for their unwavering support. The time has come to break with the hypocrisy of aid without a solution.

The real support is no longer in food rations or in the tents of refugee camps; it is in the restitution of our right to soil, dignity and security in our own country, the DRC.

Our message to the international community:

- Strengthen the capacities of peace efforts between the belligerents, the AFC/M23 through the Doha/Qatar and Washington agreements, between Rwanda and the DRC, especially to the point of neutralizing the FDLR militia and the other Wazalendo militia who want to exterminate the Tutsis of the DRC.
- That MONUSCO, through its security protocols, encourage the process of repatriation of Congolese refugees through tripartite agreements between the UNHCR, Rwanda and the DRC.
- It is up to the Kinshasa government to assume its responsibilities to govern well and not always designate a scapegoat or an internal enemy to hide the failure of the state by guaranteeing each citizen, without distinction of tribe or ethnicity, security and dignity.
- History will judge, but the Congolese Tutsi people, like any other people, deserve to live free and in peace in the land of their ancestors.

In conclusion, on behalf of all the Congolese refugees settled in Rwanda in the 5 refugee camps of Kiziba, Mahama, Nyabiheke, Ngarama and Mugombwa, we wish to return home, rebuild our villages, and contribute to the development of the DRC.

We ask for the contribution of the international community to accompany us for our return to our country, the DRC, the land of our ancestors.

Thank you.

Done in Kiziba, Rwanda on 31 July 2026

Representatives of refugees living in Rwanda:

Full name: **TURENGE BIRIKO Prosperous**

Refugee camp: **MAHAMA**

Signature : 

Full names: **MANIRAGABA Bosco**

Refugee Camp: **NYABIHEKE**

Signature: 

Full names: **NSENGAMUNGU Abel**

Refugee camp: **KIZIBA**

Signature : 

First and last names: **MUNYAKARAMBI SEBUTOZI Edson**

Refugee camp: **KIGEME**

Signature : 

First and last names: **RWAGOSORA**

Aimé Refugee camp: : **MUGOMBWA**

Signature : 