



VIA OVERNIGHT DELIVERY SERVICE

**Mr High Commissioner for Human Rights
Bureau du Haut-Commissariat aux droits de l'homme
Palais Wilson
52 rue des Pâquis
CH-1201 Genève, Suisse**

28 February 2025

Re: Demanding Accountability for the Massacre of 70 Christians in the DRC

Your Excellency,

The eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is once again sinking into violence. The M23 rebel group, supported by Rwanda, launched a large-scale offensive on the province of North Kivu in early January 2025. Primarily composed of former Congolese army soldiers, the M23 has taken control of several strategic cities, including Goma, the capital of North Kivu, and Bukavu, leading to the deaths of 7,000 Congolese and the displacement of half a million people.

This chaos benefits Islamist terrorist groups, including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a former Ugandan rebel group founded in 1995. Both the United States and the United Nations recognize the ADF as a terrorist organization, highlighting its ties with the Islamic State since 2019 and the severity of its actions in eastern DRC.

In eastern DRC, civilian populations, particularly Christian communities, are caught between the atrocities committed by Islamist terrorists on one side and the clashes between the Congolese government forces and the M23 on the other. Notably, UNICEF recorded nearly 600 cases of rape in the week following the fall of Goma. The perpetrators include both M23 rebels and Congolese forces.

In this context, on February 15, 2025, more than 70 Christian civilians were found beheaded in a Protestant church in the village of Kasanga, North Kivu. The victims, primarily women, children, and the elderly, had been abducted days earlier from their village of Mayba by the ADF.

This grave tragedy adds to a long list. In early June 2024, the ADF massacred 150 Congolese, including many Christians, in North Kivu by gunfire and machete. Pope Francis condemned this series of attacks, calling the victims "martyrs of the faith."

This major humanitarian crisis in the DRC is also linked to natural disasters exacerbated by epidemics within the country. As the Congolese state is too weak to protect its population, the UN launched an appeal on February 27, 2025, for \$2.54 billion (2.44 billion euros) to assist 11 million people.

The murder of these 70 Christians constitutes crimes against humanity due to religious persecution and is punishable under international law. International collaboration is needed to locate and prosecute the perpetrators, Islamist terrorists of various nationalities (from DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Somalia).

We call upon the United Nations to address these crimes and firmly request that the DRC prosecute the perpetrators and receive assistance in doing so.

We also call upon Rwanda to cease its support for the M23 to enable the stabilization of eastern DRC.

Furthermore, we urge the United Nations to address the structural issue of massacres of Christians across Africa, particularly in Nigeria, and to tackle this issue specifically by establishing a permanent body or a special procedure within the Human Rights Council.

Yours Sincerely,

Grégor Puppink
General Director