

DEBORAH KITUMAINI SPEECH
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As you have mentioned, my husband was assassinated because he believed in the fight for human rights. I want to speak briefly of the work done by Héritiers de la Justice (Heirs of Justice – HJ) in partnership with KAIROS.

HJ is an organization my husband directed for 10 years and for which it work continues.

HJ denounces rape as a weapon of war, in particular such crimes committed by the government troops, rebels, insurgents from neighboring countries and even by MONUC (United Nations Organization Mission in DR Congo) troops.

HJ works in collaboration with numerous partners in the region. One of these partners is Panzi hospital that cares for raped and wounded women. HJ documents the extreme violence against women, young girls and older women. The violence doesn't stop with women, its generalized violence.

Human rights defenders also face violence. They are not welcome. They disturb [the accepted impunity of human rights violations]. Several have been assassinated. Others have fled the country. In removing KAIROS funding, hence HJ funding, Canada associates itself with [human rights] violators because it impedes human rights defenders from expressing themselves.

People are in the habit of talking about food security in terms of the capacity to feed oneself in the Congo. Security takes on another aspect as women are often raped in their fields as they cultivate their crops or gather food to feed their families.

Héritiers de la Justice

HJ is not an ordinary human rights organization

HJ work to found justice in a country at war without justice

HJ does work that security forces cannot accomplish. The results are not always evident in the context of war, because war constantly destroys and shakes the work accomplished.

HJ is preparing to create a legal clinic for women to help them assert their rights and train them to help other women to do the same. What will happen to this clinic [without CIDA funding]?

In the Congo people try to silence all those who want to rise up against abuse and violence, misappropriation of resources, and those that ransack the environment. In the Congo those people are killed.

What happens in Canada? The funding is removed [from such human rights organizations].

Then the massacre of Congolese women and children, the destruction of the family and social system is permitted – isn't it to participate yet again, by absence, in a genocide?

KAIROS

KAIROS is an important partner because its staff have a great sense of justice. KAIROS has accompanied HJ throughout its course of work

KAIROS was there to follow, step by step, the work of HJ to listen and give advice.

Because KAIROS works all over the world, it can draw lessons from what is happening in other countries and other regions and benefit its partners.

KAIROS brings more than funds. It brings a support and a more valuable expertise. I felt its support at the time of my husband's assassination.

To fund KAIROS is to save lives in the Congo and to help democracy survive.

Thank you.