

**Chantal Bilulu** has worked with the Congolese human rights organization *Héritiers de la Justice* for over fourteen years, most recently as coordinator of the women and children's program.

Chantal coordinates a KAIROS-sponsored legal clinic for survivors of sexual violence in the city of Bukavu, DRC. She has organized several training courses on women's rights and raised public awareness of Congolese laws and international legal instruments designed to protect women's and children's rights. She has accompanied victims of sexual violence and organized trainings for women to become paralegals so that they can more effectively defend their rights. She has extensive experience in advocacy and conflict resolution, and has participated in several advocacy efforts to urge government authorities to implement policy changes with respect to human rights.



Born in Bujumbura, Burundi, Chantal holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Lubumbashi. She visited Canada in 2011 as part of the KAIROS Women of Courage tour. She travelled extensively at that time, including to Penelakut First Nation in B.C. and Montreal Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan, where she met with other members of the Women of Courage delegations.

**Héritiers de la Justice** promotes human rights and peace building in war-torn eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. In partnership with KAIROS, this courageous organization has assisted hundreds of women through human rights training workshops and established a legal clinic for survivors of rape and gender-based violence.

[www.heritiersdelajustice.org](http://www.heritiersdelajustice.org)

**KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives** unites eleven Christian churches and religious organizations in a faithful ecumenical response to the call to "do justice, and love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

[www.kairoscanada.org](http://www.kairoscanada.org)

# Women peacebuilders need our support

*Excerpts from the KAIROS brief to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, April 13, 2016:*

“KAIROS and our Congolese human rights partner organization, *Héritiers de la Justice*, run a legal clinic that provides legal accompaniment and counselling to victims of sexual violence. To enable women to defend their rights and engage in peace building, paralegals and women’s rights educators from the clinic hold training workshops on domestic law, international human rights instruments and UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Supported by *Héritiers de la Justice*, local women’s committees have been established in towns and villages to help women support each other and break their silence around sexual violence.



“In 2013, Canada made a significant investment of \$18 million through the United Nations Development Program to fight impunity around sexual violence in D.R. Congo. Through this project, mobile tribunals have been created to travel into rural areas of eastern Congo and facilitate access to justice. While this institution building is critical, it requires the participation and trust of women at a local level. Without investing in such grassroots capacity building by local organizations, Canada’s commitment to ending impunity through this larger multilateral project will not be fully realized. So, it’s not an “either-or” scenario. For peace building and women’s empowerment to be truly lasting, top-down national and regional initiatives must be accompanied by grassroots civil society-led initiatives. [...]

“KAIROS believes our global partners and our international programming are transformative and deliver long-lasting, sustainable results. We see the lives that are changed, the communities that are empowered, and the women who regain their dignity and are able to exercise their rights.”<sup>i</sup>

## **Recommendations from KAIROS and Héritiers de la Justice**

### **The Government of Canada should:**

- 1. Consult and collaborate with women’s rights organizations and their international partners on its policy development and programming around Women, Peace and Security issues.**
- 2. Provide more financial support to women's rights organizations and grassroots civil society organizations for peace-building efforts in conflict-affected and fragile states.**

# Latest threats to democracy in the Democratic Republic of Congo

*Excerpt from Héritiers de la Justice's "Nota Bene" newsletter of April 15, 2016:*

"Following the Presidential and Congressional elections of November 28, 2011, which were marred by widespread fraud and irregularities, democracy in the Democratic Republic of Congo has been hobbled. Since that time, elections at the provincial, senate, local and municipal levels, which were supposed to be held according to a schedule established by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), have not taken place. More and more justifications are being advanced by political elites, either to deny the population their constitutional rights to elect their leaders regularly or in an effort to change the rules of the democratic game that were put in place at great cost through a long popular struggle paid for with the blood of the Congolese people during the dictatorship and the wars of liberation and/or resistance.

"One of the latest strategies being pursued by members of congress in the presidential majority coalition is a petition to the Constitutional Court seeking an interpretation of Article 70 of the Constitution regarding Presidential term limits. Their objective is to obtain authorization from a constitutional judge to bend the existing Constitution and inaugurate the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic by removing the fundamental legal provision limiting the Presidential term limits to two terms and/or allowing the Head of State, at the end of his current term this December, to remain in office and lead to an eventual transition that would emerge from the national dialogue process he has already initiated." <sup>ii</sup>

## **Recommendations from KAIROS and Héritiers de la Justice**

### **The Government of Canada should:**

- 3. In solidarity with the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), increase diplomatic pressure on the DRC presidential administration to respect the Constitution and stop curtailing democratic space in the country.**
- 4. Mobilize Canadian resources for international election observation in the DRC in 2016.**
- 5. Support Congolese civil society organizations in their efforts to increase civic engagement and strengthen the democratic process through capacity building and human rights training, with a particular emphasis on gender equality.**

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.kairoscanada.org/brief-women-peace-security>

<sup>ii</sup> [http://www.heritiersdelajustice.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=372:la-majorite-presidentielle-toujours-resolue-a-chiffonner-la-constitution&catid=34:information&Itemid=86](http://www.heritiersdelajustice.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=372:la-majorite-presidentielle-toujours-resolue-a-chiffonner-la-constitution&catid=34:information&Itemid=86)