

English Translation of HJ communication of

Nobel Peace Laureate 2018: Dr. Denis Mukwege received this Saturday, October 6, 2018 the congratulations of the South Kivu civil society at Panzi Hospital

This Saturday, October 6, 2018, around 11:15 a.m., 23 members of the civil society organizations from South Kivu, [Democratic Republic of the Congo, DR Congo] led by Patient Bashombe, Esq., President of the Coordinating Office of South Kivu civil society, were received by Dr. Denis Mukwege, 2018 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, in the compound of the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, South Kivu province, DR Congo. The purpose of the visit of this important delegation of social actors from South Kivu was the presentation of the congratulations of civil society to the medical doctor who is the pride of the civil society, the province of South Kivu and DR Congo as witnessed by the countless titles and awards that the world continues to bestow on him as a recognition of his over 20 years of dedicated work for peace, the dignity of women, including those who have been victims of sexual violence, democracy and the advent of the rule of law in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Dr. Denis is indeed the founder and Director of the Panzi Hospital and the Panzi Foundation, two structures based in Bukavu that provide holistic support to women victims of sexual and gender-based violence.

From the outset, the head of delegation, Patient Bashombe, Esq., conveyed the message of congratulations to this illustrious person for the Nobel Prize that has just been awarded. *"It has been for a long time that we expected this prize,"* he said before adding that for civil society of South Kivu, *"the fight is not over yet dear Dr. Nobel Prize"*. According to the head of the delegation, *"this prize does not belong to Dr. Denis Mukwege, but it is an award for the entire civil society of the DR Congo in general and the province of South Kivu in particular. Therefore, (South Kivu civil society) has the duty to accompany the laureate in his work."* Finally, Bashombe asked Dr. Denis Mukwege what he expects from civil society organizations.

Speaking, the Nobel laureate said that he and civil society are fighting together. If the world talks about it today, it is his duty to receive civil society. While recognizing that this award belongs to civil society, Dr. Mukwege said that it is rather the latter that must express its expectations vis-à-vis him. It is up to him to raise awareness widely and advocate accompanied by civil society, given the opportunities it offers him by winning the Nobel Peace Prize.

He asked the civil society organizations not to break with the base of society. *"They must have a higher ideal. Civil society is a counter-power and not a stepping stool. Unfortunately, many actors in this structure use the latter to get where they want to go to the satisfaction of their unique interests in defiance of the vital needs of vulnerable populations. That's why some of them work in a scattered way instead of staying united,"* warned Nobel Denis.

To meet this challenge, according to Dr. Denis Mukwege, *"civil society must ask itself what it wants for the Congo. It must ask if it is only the others who are called to come to impose peace here at home. Far from it! Since the conflicts tearing down the DRC are neither tribal nor religious, this ideal of peace should be able to mobilize everyone. People must think deeply about peace. It is for lack of this that most Congolese languish in misery. Every day, the population is exposed to killings, extortion of property, rape, burning of houses or entire villages, kidnappings, etc. This is what makes people no longer do a good job, rather, everyone is fighting in his or her corner for survival! It is difficult to think effectively about peace when survival becomes the first or only concern of the people. And the potential available to the Congolese people is not used properly."*

Ultimately, the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize promises to accompany civil society actors in their daily work. He calls for the mobilization of everyone so that the Congolese people themselves impose peace in his country. And for these actors to succeed, they must ask themselves why their work no longer has as palpable an impact as in the past.

Following the address by Dr. Mukwege, some civil society actors took the floor to suggest that Dr. Denis Mukwege, in particular, do more for women, to involve civil society even more in his actions, to raise the voice of Congolese bruised by the lack of peace and democracy for several decades, to continue the fight and advocate for the elections expected since 2016 to take place this year and that they be credible, transparent and democratic because civil society has pointed out the various ills criticized in the DRC including sexual violence, killings, kidnappings, poverty, unemployment ... which are the result of deficient visionary and indebted governance that has characterized the country for several years.

In response, the Nobel laureate called on civil society to capitalize on this award by becoming even more engaged in the work of defending universally recognized human rights, peace, values and democratic principles. This should not be or remain a slogan but a conviction of us all. Also, he urged civil society organizations to do memory work on what really happened in the DRC: *"people have died and continue to die, women and girls have been raped and they continue to be, crimes and abuses of all kinds have been committed in our country: the victims and their relatives ruminate hatred because of what they have suffered. This is not good. All this must be exhumed, that there be time for reconciliation after which everyone would say what they had been hiding in their inner selves. We must not build peace, development on mass graves"*, said Dr. Denis Mukwege. And to add that he said that *"the duty of memory is not a revenge but rather so that the crimes decried cannot be repeated. If we live in hate, we will destroy each other"*, concluded the Nobel Peace laureate.

Represented at this reception by three members of [Héritiers de la Justice] staff, including Chantal Bilulu, in charge of the Women and Children's program, in the capacity of acting Executive Secretary, and Lubala Neema, Animator in the program, as well as Télesphore Namukama, who is in charge of the campaign and communication program. The non-profit association Héritiers de la Justice welcomes this worldwide recognition of the work that Congolese civil society is doing through Dr. Denis Mukwege.

[Chantal Bilulu] took the opportunity to support the idea of holding a workshop to examine the work of South Kivu civil society organizations in a timely manner, with the help of Dr. Denis Mukwege and other non-partisan stakeholders. Héritiers de la Justice is convinced that once such an undertaking is well supported, the results that will come from this challenge will allow civil society to mobilize even more popular Congolese and external energies just like what the former civil society free from any political partisanship had been in the past and thus palpable positive changes for the well-being of the Congolese people will ensue.

Bukavu, October 06, 2018

Héritiers de la Justice, non-profit association