

Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives / Initiatives œcuméniques canadiennes pour la justice

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December 21, 2020

The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne Minister of Foreign Affairs Global Affairs Canada 125 Sussex Drive Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2

Dear Mr. Champagne,

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, a joint venture of 10 Canadian churches and religious organizations, urges the Canadian government to reinforce the international community and civil society in their efforts to bring peace to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

KAIROS supports the Women, Peace and Security work of Héritiers de la Justice in Sud-Kivu province of eastern DRC, a program jointly funded by Global Affairs Canada. We have witnessed the critical work of civil society in the DRC, particularly grassroots women, in building conditions for just, inclusive, and equitable peace while addressing ongoing impunity in relation to violence and human rights violations.

Parliamentary turbulence and political turmoil have significantly increased in the DRC with the recent breakdown in the ruling CACH-FCC coalition which has been in place since early 2019 between *Cap pour le Changement* of the current President and *Front Commun pour le Congo* of the former President. Evidence of crimes committed during the First and Second Congo Wars from 1993 through 2003 established the foundational <u>United Nations Mapping Report</u>. Similar crimes continue to this day. The fact that the Congolese government has not been able to address these crimes adequately and that impunity prevails compels a response from Canada and the international community. Militias, rebels and undisciplined segments of the Congolese army continue to operate with impunity, especially in the east of the country and often in relation to resource extraction.

In this context of impunity and growing unrest, KAIROS joins Héritiers de la Justice and other members of Congolese civil society in urging the Canadian government and international community to take urgent action on the following demands:

- The establishment of an international criminal tribunal or court with the powers to try and judge the countless crimes committed in the DRC and allow victims access to reparations;
- The fundamental revision of the laws that regulate democratic life in the DRC including electoral laws as well as an overhaul of the Independent



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Canada M4Y 3G2 tel: 416.463.5312 toll-free: 1.877.403.8933 www.kairoscanada.org National Electoral Commission (Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante, CENI); and,

• Active diplomatic and financial support to women in the prosecution of those responsible for gross violations of human rights and crimes against women and in decision-making mechanisms at the earliest stages of peacebuilding.

KAIROS urges the Canadian government to use its voice and influence with the Congolese government and other international stakeholders to address these urgent demands.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Henry Executive Director

cc: Nicolas Simard - Canadian Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo