



Rwandan Platform for Dialogue, Truth, and Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

THE RDTJ CONDEMNS MILITARY ATTACKS ON UNARMED RWANDAN REFUGEES IN EASTERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC)

The RDTJ strongly condemns the heinous and senseless atrocities being committed by the Rwandan Defence Force (RDF) and *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC) against Rwandan Hutu refugees in their joint operation effort to eliminate and neutralise the *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR), a freedom fighter movement. On Wednesday, March 04, 2015, Rwandan Hutu refugees who are residents of Kirama and Rucuro villages were militarily attacked by RDF/FARC killing tens of refugees and villagers as well as leaving dozens of others wounded. These attacks uprooted these refugees and locals, forcing them to flee.

Rwandan Hutu refugees who are currently in the DRC are the remnants of the 1994-1996 refugees who were subjected to forced massive repatriation that took place in 1997 when Rwanda, after forming alliance with the *Alliance des forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo* (AFDL), invaded the DRC and destroyed the refugee camps under the auspices of the international community, that is the UNHCR. These refugees were abandoned by it to their own fate since then. Again, it is reported that artillery and mortars are being used to shell bombs on the villages in which Rwandan refugees sought sanctuary and thus killing women, children, elderly and the infirm in an area, monitored by the international community, that is, MONUSCO. For two decades, said refugees have not received an international protection or humanitarian assistance. To them, it has been a daily struggle to survive without social services such as access to healthcare, to education, to clean water and without their human and refugee rights being protected. The majority of them have accordingly been vulnerable to various diseases caused by malnutrition, trauma, stress, and depression.

It is crucial to point out that the Rwanda/AFDL invasion of DRC and attacks on refugees left 300 000 Hutu refugees and approximately eight million Congolese people dead. Millions of others were left internally displaced. These massive killings perpetrated against refugees were, on the basis of UN experts, described by the 01 October 2010 UN Mapping Report as a possible genocide against Hutu population. Generally, all these atrocities were classified as war crimes and crimes against humanity. Instead of the international community condemning such heinous atrocities and eventually supporting the dispensing of justice to victims (as it did in Rwanda), it

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supported the invasion and subsequent joint operations – including *Umoja Wethu*, *Kimya I* and *Kimya II* – whose aim and purpose was directed at eliminating Hutu refugees who sought sanctuary in the dense forest of the DRC. Rationale behind these incessant attacks is absurd: Rwandan Hutu refugees have been classified by Rwanda as a threat to its safety and security on the basis of an unjustified ground of having a high propensity to commit genocide against Tutsi compatriots. For the post-genocide Rwandan regime, it is not only Hutu refugees labelled as *genocidaire* by nature but all the entire Hutu population, including their unborn children. This dangerous medieval ideology has been sold to the international community. It has bought into that ideology without reserve. As a result, Hutu refugees were deprived of their rights and freedoms guaranteed by both human and refugee rights conventions. Hence they are viewed as people who are not rational human beings.

However, though the entire Hutu population is blamed for the calamity that befell Rwanda, the December 2011 Appeal Chamber of the UN Tribunals' decisions in the Military-I, Military-II, and Government-I concluded that there was no conspiracy and no planning to kill Tutsi civilians whereas the October 2014 BBC Documentary's Untold Story revealed critical evidence that illustrates the role also played by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in the commission of genocide crimes and other human rights abuses committed inside and outside Rwanda between 1990 and 2014. Seen from this, both Hutu and Tutsi are victims and perpetrators. They are both genocide survivors. Both ethnics must proportionately share accountability.

Regardless of these facts, a support for the Government of Rwanda's medieval ideology is illustrative. The United Nations Security Council – without providing a sound reason – objected to the dialogue called by the Rwandan Hutu refugees to resolve their refugee situation. Rather it supported – as a top priority – the Government of Rwanda's proposal to militarily attack and thus commit further genocide against 245 000 Rwandan Hutu refugees who are still surviving – simply because an insignificant number ranging from 1500 to 2500 are combatants of the FDLR. In fact, the FDLR has been engaging in a voluntary disarmament process in order to pursue political negotiations as an alternative and most appropriate route to durable peace and stability. To get here, the FDLR has, since its inception in 2000, been calling for international bodies, *inter alia*, United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) to intervene in the Rwandan historically-ethnic conflict and act as mediators in a search of a viable solution to the protracted refugee and political problems that are major contributors to the Great Lakes region's ongoing violence.

The United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) responded by classifying the FDLR as a terrorist group that must be hunted down and eliminated. Using their political influences and muscles as well their own resources, they were able to convince the UN Security Council to take resolutions authorising military actions against refugees, including financial support to carry out those actions. These resolutions were surely taken in breach of the core of the foundation of the UN which is to promote peaceful settlement of disputes through political negotiations.

We therefore appeal to the African Heads of the States and Governments to condemn military attacks against unarmed and defenceless Rwandan Hutu refugees who have been suffering from the scourge of wars for two decades. We call upon you, Your Excellencies, to support a political settlement suggested by the FDLR. Our unity and solidarity – African Union – is founded on the progressive principles of the protection of human dignity, of peaceful settlement of disputes by dialogue and, most importantly, of unreserved condemnation, in all its forms, of political assassination as well as of subversive activities on the part of neighbouring States or any other States. We should recall that our African traditions put human persons above any other interests. In this context, the Zulu belief/proverb that *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* which, literally translated, means a person can only be a person through others should not be taken lightly in dealing with issues affecting Rwandan refugees in DRC. Now, we have to say, though, that beyond that, all members of human family should condemn these senseless acts of violence which have the consequences of denying the Congolese people and Rwandan Hutu refugees an appropriate environment to live in a dignified manner. Our immediate thoughts and prayers are with the wounded and with the families of those who lost their beloved ones, and with those who have been and continue to be the victims of the on-going conflict in the Eastern of DRC, be it psychologically, physically, or materially.

The RDTJ reiterates its support for a sincerely negotiated political settlement and its condemnation of any further attempt to shed more blood. Rwandan Hutu refugees are human beings whose dignity must be respected and protected. Together, we can make their cries for peace and freedom a reality. We strongly believe that sustainable peace, stability, and respect for humanity can be achieved through dialogue and not by military means.

Done at Cape Town, South Africa, on March 06, 2015.

For the RDTJ

Callixte Kavuro, Chairperson