

His Excellency Ban Ki-moon
UN Secretary-General
United Nations Room S-3800
New York NY 10017
U.S.A

Brussels, 21 November 2008

Ref. Humanitarian crisis in Eastern and Northeastern DR Congo

Your Excellency,

We address this letter to you as an international NGO having a Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC. Pax Christi International is a faith-based network working for peace and justice uniting over hundred non-governmental organisations around the world, including several member organisations in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Great Lakes Region.

Pax Christi International has received several alarming pleas and calls from different partners concerning the dramatic humanitarian crisis in the east and northeast of DR Congo. Clashes between the army and the rebel forces of General Nkunda have driven an estimated 250,000 people from their homes. Reports tell us about the details how civilians have been summarily executed and that corpses line the streets. The UN has accused the different sides of atrocities.

The international community must take its responsibility to protect the innocent civilians of this conflict. The latest statement of the Permanent Commission of the National Episcopal Conference of the DR Congo (CENCO) states that “the situation in this part of our country has only worsened and is taking on unbearable dimensions, highly disquieting and capable of destabilizing the whole region if something is not done urgently.” (13 November 2008)

At present, the UN mission in the DR Congo (MONUC) is made up of 17,000 soldiers and police. But MONUC’s observer role is too weak, witnessing widespread violence but lacking an adequate mandate to respond. Interventions are routinely slow and ineffective. The Security Council’s decision to increase of the number of UN troops in the country is a positive step, but the increase must be accompanied by greater effectiveness on the ground. As a stabilization force,

MONUC should be more involved in the consequences but also in the causes of the conflict.

The UN envoy Olusegun Obasanjo should step up his efforts in mediating with all parties involved to get a negotiated solution as soon as possible. Peace agreements of Goma and Nairobi should likewise be implemented.

Pax Christi International calls for the immediate cessation of hostilities, for the respect of international law and for the conditions of security that assure the return of all the displaced to their lands. We also appeal, together with humanitarian NGOs, for national and international solidarity, so that humanitarian aid is increased in for the thousands of men, women and children crowding the camps.

We are well aware about the complex situation in the Great Lakes Region. But we ask you, together with many others, to continue to work towards a stable peace in the region and towards an effective impact of the MONUC mandate in stabilising the humanitarian situation and save the peace process.

We thank you for all your efforts towards the pacification of Eastern DR Congo.

Claudette Werleigh
Secretary General

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