

**Open Letter from National Organisations to
His Excellency
The President of the Democratic Republic of Congo
On the Arrest of Bosco NTAGANDA**

His Excellency President Joseph Kabila Kabange,
Gombe, Kinshasa,
Democratic Republic of Congo

Goma, February 19, 2009

With our highest respect,

Your Excellency,

As the representatives of 51 Congolese NGOs in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, we have the honour of writing to Your Excellency to voice our alarm and concerns.

Since there can be no sustainable peace and security without justice, we urge you to respect your international commitments and to deliver the war criminal Bosco Ntaganda to The Hague, where he is sought by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes in the Ituri District of eastern DRC between 2002 and 2003.

As we wait for Ntaganda's arrest when the moment is right, we were surprised to learn of his role in the joint military operations with the Congolese and Rwandan forces in eastern DRC, and of his senior position within the campaign.

It is an insult to justice that a wanted man is involved in military operations in eastern DRC. It is also an insult to the victims if yesterday's torturers are today their protectors.

In addition to the crimes committed by Ntaganda in Ituri, he also stands accused of recently perpetrating additional crimes in North Kivu during his time as Military Chief of Staff for the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP).

Your Excellency, we still have fresh memories of the widespread crimes against humanity committed by the CNDP troops under Bosco's command in Kiwanja, where more than 150 of our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers and children were brutally slaughtered like animals by his troops.

And also in Ituri, we cannot forget the terror that Bosco unleashed on us for many years, brutally slaughtering the people of Ituri in their thousands without pity, without humanity. We still bear scars that cannot be erased. We must honour the memory of those we lost by saying 'never again' to such killings, and sending a strong message that those responsible for such crimes will be held to account. Future generations must know not only that we suffered, but also that we acted to end the suffering by fighting for justice.

Your Excellency, we believe that these crimes deserve to be punished in an exemplary manner, as the Congolese Minister of Justice declared at The Hague during the Seventh Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the Statutes of the International Criminal Court. Granting the perpetrators of such crimes high ranking positions in the army, or even in government, mocks the very people who have already suffered too much, and who expect your protection.

We have been informed that many military, administrative, political and judicial authorities who are committed to peace do not support the approach of promoting criminals. They are as frustrated as we are. And we all wish to see your involvement in the fight to end impunity in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

This is a golden opportunity, Your Excellency, to prove that you will translate words into action. You can prove that our people can count on you, and can continue to trust in you, to bring peace to eastern DRC and to restore justice.

In facilitating the arrest of Bosco Ntaganda and his transfer to The Hague, and ensuring also that Laurent Nkunda faces justice in a fair and equitable manner for crimes committed by troops under his command, you would send a strong message to other combatants who might commit further serious crimes. This would mark, we believe, the beginning of the end of the culture of impunity.

We know that the Democratic Republic of Congo is a Party to the Rome Statute that established the ICC and is therefore under an obligation to facilitate its work, specifically in pursuing, arresting and transferring suspects wanted by the court. We applaud the DRC's cooperation with the ICC thus far, and we ask you to continue to offer such unconditional cooperation, thereby once again meriting the respect of the victims of these crimes.

As Congolese NGOs, we are proud that our country has been at the forefront of sending war criminals to The Hague and supporting international justice. It gives us hope that our terrible suffering might end and that the blood shed by our brothers and sisters will not have been in vain. We have repeatedly requested the ICC to start investigations in the Kivu provinces and we were overjoyed when the court announced that it would do so. But if Ntaganda is not arrested, what hope is there that those who massacred our fellow citizens in the Kivus will ever be arrested? Can we rely on our own corrupt judicial system? If only international justice can help us, why not assist this process by continuing to deliver the criminals sought by the ICC?

Your Excellency, we thank you in advance for your attention to this letter and to our cry of alarm.

Yours sincerely,

A Coalition of 51 NGOs in eastern DRC:

1. ACPD
2. Action des Chrétiens Activistes des Droits de l'Homme a Shabunda (ACADHOSHA)
3. Action Sociale pour la Paix et le Développement (ASPD)

4. AFEMEDI
5. AJPD (Africa Justice Peace and Development)
6. ALCM
7. Ami-Kivu
8. ANAMAD
9. BADES
10. Centre d'Appui pour le Développement Rural Communautaire (CADERCO)
11. Centre de Recherche sur l'Environnement, la Démocratie et les Droits de l'Homme (CREDDHO)
12. Centre d'Etudes et de Recherche en Education de Base pour le Développement Intégré (CEREBA)
13. Centre Pelican (Ituri)
14. CIPSOPA
15. Coalition de la RDC pour la Cour Pénal Internationale (CPI)
16. CODHOP
17. Collectif des Organisations des Jeunes Solidaires du Congo-Kinshasa au Nord-Kivu (COJESKI/Nord Kivu)
18. Conseil Régional des Organisations Non Gouvernementales de Développement (CRONGD)
19. FELEMA
20. GAIDER
21. GAM
22. Group d'Etudes et d'Actions Pour un Développement Bien Défini (GEAD)
23. Groupe de Voix de Sans Voix (GVSV)
24. Hommes solidaires pour le développement (HSD/UJRSD)
25. Human Dignity in the World (HDW)
26. Institut René Cassin
27. ISDR Grands Lacs Kiwanja
28. Justice Plus (Ituri)
29. La Synergie des femmes pour les victimes des violences sexuelles (SFVS)
30. Le Centre de promotion socio sanitaire (CEPROSSAN)
31. Le Centre pour la Paix et les Droits de l'Homme - Peace and Human Rights Center (CPDH-PHRC)
32. Ligue pour la Solidarité Congolaise
33. LINAJEUN-RDC
34. PAL
35. PAMI
36. PAPH
37. Promotion de la Démocratie et Protection des Droits Humains (PDH)
38. Promotion et Appui aux Initiatives Féminines (PAIF)
39. Réseau Congolais d'Actions sur les Armes Légères et le Petit Calibre (RECAAL)
40. Réseau d'Organisations des Droits Humains, d'Education Civique et de Paix (RODHECIP)
41. Réseau Provincial des ONG de Droits de l'Homme - Nord Kivu (REPRODHOC-NK)
42. SAMS-Congo
43. SIDE
44. Société Civile Kiwanja
45. Solidarité Féminine pour la Paix et le Développement Intégral (SOFEPADI)
46. Solidarité pour la Promotion sociale et la Paix (SOPROP)

- 47. SYLAM
- 48. UCODE
- 49. UCOOPANOKI
- 50. UFEMCO
- 51. UWAKI

- Cc :
- Hon. Léon Kengo Wa Dondo, President of the Senate
 - Hon. Vital Kamerhe, President of the National Assembly
 - His Excellency, Adolphe Muzito, Prime Minister
 - His Excellency, Charles Mwando Simba, Minister of Defence
 - His Excellency, Luzolo Bambi Lessa, Minister of Justice
 - His Excellency, Upio Kakura, Minister of Human Rights
 - Mr. Alan Doss, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations in DRC
 - General John Numbi, Inspector General of the Police
 - His Excellency, Julien Paluku, Governor of North Kivu
 - His Excellency, Louis Léonce Cirimwami Muderhwa, Governor of South Kivu
 - His Excellency, Autsai Asenga Medard, Governor of Province Orientale