

INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP - MEDIA RELEASE

**Disarmament of Rwandan Hutu rebels in the Congo:  
MONUC's impotence a liability**

**Nairobi/Brussels, 23 May 2003:** A new approach is needed to the disarmament and reintegration (DR) of Hutu rebels in eastern Congo. The current mechanism for disarmament of armed groups, through the United Nations Mission in Congo (MONUC), is a failure. A new report [Rwandan Hutu Rebels in the Congo: a New Approach to Disarmament and Reintegration](#)\* from the International Crisis Group (ICG) calls on the Security Council to rethink the DR operation urgently and reinforce MONUC's mandate to allow it to use force in self-defence and in defence of civilians. MONUC itself must also speed up its troop deployments in the eastern Congo.

MONUC has managed to disarm and repatriate only a few hundred Hutu fighters out of 15,000 to 20,000 rebels spread over 150,000 square kilometres. The main Hutu rebel group to be disarmed, the FDLR, has many allies among the warlords and militias of eastern Congo. And until Rwanda moves towards greater political openness and reconciliation, they will not disarm. The fact that Rwanda and the Congo (DRC) have so far kept their military options open further diminishes prospects for disarmament and demobilisation of Rwandan rebels.

Disarmament by force is not an option. What is needed are stronger diplomatic efforts, with Rwanda in particular and between Rwanda and the DRC, to address the security, political and economic concerns of the *non-génocidaire* FDLR rank and file. The recent violence in Ituri, where hundreds of people have died in horrific circumstances, illustrates MONUC's impotence. MONUC needs the urgent deployment of a rapid reaction force to restore order in Ituri and prevent further massacres of the civilians it is already mandated to protect. It also needs military capacity to deter the Hutu rebels from destabilising Rwanda and to back-up renewed diplomatic efforts for voluntary disarmament.

ICG Central Africa Project Director Francois Grignon said:

"The disarmament and repatriation plan to be carried out by MONUC is fundamentally flawed. It treats disarmament as strictly a security issue, and a Congolese issue. The internal Rwandan political dimension has not received serious attention".

In June, a transition government is to be installed in Kinshasa. It has been tempting for MONUC to rely on the inclusion of Rwanda's ally in eastern Congo, the RCD, to implement the disarmament process. But this is a faulty calculation. The Security Council should seize the opportunity presented by the creation of a new government to give a new dynamism to disarmament efforts, and the international community as a whole must convince the Rwandan government that the solution to ending the spiral of violence is its own political opening, and a genuine national debate on the country's future.

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**\*Full report (in French only) on our website: [www.crisisweb.org](http://www.crisisweb.org)**

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## RWANDAN HUTU REBELS IN THE CONGO:

### A NEW APPROACH TO DISARMAMENT AND REINTEGRATION

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While a transition government is scheduled to be installed in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in June 2003, the program of the United Nations Mission in Congo (MONUC) for voluntary disarmament and demobilisation, repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRRR, henceforth DR) of foreign armed groups has remained a failure. Authorised by Security Council mandate on 18 November 2001 to deploy in eastern Congo, MONUC has repatriated only a few hundred Rwandan ex-rebels and has opened only one demobilisation centre at Lubero in North Kivu. The participation of South African observers in the Third Party Verification Mechanism (TPVM) established by an accord between Rwanda and Congo in July 2002, has not changed anything. MONUC has still not deployed a serious force in eastern Congo or constructed a credible DR program.

Many factors have contributed to this failure. First, the political and security environment is quite unfavourable for the deployment of UN forces (which themselves have been disorganised and in need of a new mandate and structures) in territory controlled by the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD) and other proxies for Rwanda and Uganda. The profusion of armed groups and warlords sympathetic to the Hutu rebels (FDLR) and the open hostility of the RCD rebellion make it extremely difficult to disarm hostile forces that are at least 15,000 strong and have been hardened by more than eight years of fighting across 150,000 square kilometres. But most of all, Rwanda and DRC's decision to keep their military options open, and the tension between Rwanda and Uganda that has led to the intensification of the conflict in the Northeastern province of Ituri have diminished any prospect for disarmament and demobilisation of the Rwandan rebels. The Kinshasa government has resumed its support of them, after having stopped between November 2002 and February 2003. The Mai Mai's continued alliance with the Hutu armed groups has also maintained their military capacity.

Secondly, the DR concept is fundamentally flawed. To date, MONUC's mandate and the Pretoria Accord of July 2002 have treated disarmament strictly as a security and Congolese issue. In other words, the internal Rwandan political dimension, has not received serious attention. Neither MONUC nor the TPVM has made any genuine political contacts with the FDLR, the group that is supposed to disarm. And not a single international actor has publicly made the link between the DR process of the FDLR in the Congo and the need for greater political openness and reconciliation in Rwanda.

The only alternative to voluntary disarmament is disarmament by force. This has been tried and has not succeeded. There is no military solution to the problem of the FDLR. The Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF, formerly Rwandan Patriotic Army) have not succeeded in destroying them in six years of military presence in North and South Kivu. The majority of the FDLR rejects the process of voluntary disarmament. The attack on the military camp at Kamina, where FDLR were cantoned, by Congo's armed forces (FAC) and the forced repatriation of eight civilian members of the movement by TPVM on 1 November 2002 prompted them to threaten reprisals against South Africa and MONUC. What is needed now are stronger diplomatic efforts that address the security, political and economic concerns of the *non-génocidaires* FDLR rank and file, including with the government of Rwanda and between Rwanda and the DRC.

Far from disappearing, the problem of the Rwandan opposition has become more complicated. The FDLR has linked up with the *Concertation permanente de l'opposition démocratique rwandaise* (CPODR), which groups together almost all Rwanda's exiled opposition parties,

including Tutsi genocide survivors, and is calling for suspension of Rwanda's transition timetable and denouncing the authoritarianism of the RPF. At the same time, its military command is reorganising troops and preparing destabilisation operations in case its political strategy fails. For its part, the Rwandan government flatly refuses to recognise, let alone negotiate with, an opposition it sees as *génocidaire* and terrorist and refuses to accept any international intervention in what it sees as an internal matter. It is pursuing its transition agenda by seeking to eliminate virtually all internal political opposition before July 2003 elections and by redeploying troops into the Congo under the umbrella of the RCD. This political strategy permits the exiled opposition to find more support inside the country and has only heightened tensions.

There is at present a great temptation for MONUC to rely on the inclusion of Rwanda's ally, the RCD, in the DRC transitional government to implement the DR process and to shift its focus to supporting Kinshasa's political transition. However, this is a faulty calculation. Despite prospects for an inclusive government, Rwanda's allies continue to fight, and Kabila's government continues to provide supplies to the FDLR. This is the reality that MONUC has to tackle squarely before it can ever hope that a unified government will lead to a genuine DR. In parallel with strengthened diplomacy, MONUC must assume a true peacekeeping presence in the east and in the northeast, where the fighting is taking place. As we see now in Ituri, MONUC's impotence has become a dramatic liability to the Congo peace process. MONUC needs to urgently deploy a rapid reaction force to restore order and prevent further massacres of the civilians it is already mandated to protect. It also needs credible military force to deter the FDLR from destabilising Rwanda and to back-up its diplomatic efforts for voluntary disarmament. If the war does not stop in the east, the new Congolese government will quickly lose all its credibility, and the entire MONUC mission will become a nullity.

It is vital that the Security Council seize the opportunity of the new transition government in the DRC to give a new dynamism to DR operations that have suffered from a lack of commitment of the parties and a lack of political leadership. MONUC should, therefore, complete its deployment in the east and fulfil its obligations towards DR operations. It must enable the transition government to restore its authority across the country, while isolating and maintaining watch over the FDLR, making direct contact with it, and finally establishing a credible disarmament and reintegration program. Simultaneously the South African government and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) should work together to transform the July 2002 Pretoria agreement into a durable and comprehensive peace agreement between the RDC and Rwanda. They should also be given a Security Council mandate to lead consultations with the Rwandan Hutu rebels on disarmament, as well as with the Rwandan government. The international community as a whole must convince the Rwandan government that the solution to ending the spiral of violence is a political opening, the precondition for which is a genuine national debate.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **To the Secretary General and Security Council of the United Nations:**

1. Give a reinforced peacekeeping mandate to MONUC with authorisation to use force in self-defence and in the defence of civilians, to ensure border security between Rwanda and the Kivus and monitor infiltration by the FDLR into Rwanda. Ensure that MONUC's stated objectives in the current phase of operations (deployment in occupied zones, DR, support for local reconciliation) remain a priority in the transitional period.
2. Give a specific mandate to the SRSG, in coordination with the South African government, to consult on the modalities of disarmament and repatriation with the FDLR and the government of Rwanda and to transform the July 2002 Pretoria accord into a durable and comprehensive peace accord between the next DRC government and Rwanda.

3. Establish a Commission of Inquiry into the events at Kamina on 31 October and 1 November 2002.

**To MONUC:**

4. Speed up deployment in the east of the DRC and fulfill its Phase III commitments as part of overall support to the transition.

5. Denounce both continued support by the Kabila government to FDLR and continued unofficial Rwandan presence in the DRC.

6. Promote negotiations between the RCD and the Mai Mai on establishment of neutral zones and corridors to be used as assembly points to which candidates for voluntary disarmament can go without being attacked.

7. Demand that member states of the United Nations, in particular Austria, the country from which the transmissions originate, give technical support for the jamming of radio frequencies used by the FDLR.

**To the financial supporters of the DRC and Rwanda:**

8. Demand that the governments of the DRC and Rwanda respect the letter and spirit of the Pretoria accord of July 2002 and condition bilateral and multilateral aid to such a demand.

9. Put pressure on the government of Rwanda to liberalise its internal politics before the end of the transition.

**To the government of South Africa:**

10. Assist the transformation of the Pretoria accord into a durable and comprehensive peace agreement between the future transitional government of the DRC and Rwanda.

11. Persuade the government of Rwanda to liberalise domestic political life and make gestures of openness towards the opposition parties in exile, on condition that they order their troops to disarm, contribute actively to the arrest of those accused of genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), vigorously denounce all revisionist ideology in respect of the genocide and clarify their program and commitment to reconciliation.

**To the current and future transitional governments of the DRC:**

12. Respect the Pretoria accord to the letter by:

(a) ending immediately all support to the FDLR; and

(b) ensuring that all information they possess about the FDLR, its numbers, organisation, location and equipment, reaches MONUC and TPVM.

13. Establish a negotiation mechanism with the Mai Mai to ensure the pacification of the Kivus.

14. Engage in parallel consultations with the government of Rwanda to reach a durable and comprehensive peace agreement.

**To the Rwandan government:**

15. Liberalise political activity across the country and organise a national debate on the rules of integration of all political groups during preparations for the coming elections.

16. Authorise the return and participation of exiled political parties before the next elections, on condition that they order their armed branch, the FDLR, to put down its arms, accept the DR program of MONUC, recognise publicly and without ambiguity the genocide against the Tutsis, and engage sincerely in the process of reconciliation.

17. Begin direct discussions with the internal and external opposition with a view to negotiating a new constitution for the post-transition period.

18. Create an ombudsman office, independent of government, to regulate political party activities and supervise a depoliticised reconciliation process.

**To the opposition in exile:**

19. End the armed struggle, support cantonment, demobilisation and repatriation of troops in line with MONUC's program of DR, and suspend all activities that envisage a military solution to the internal political problems of Rwanda.

20. Cooperate with the ICTR in providing all information in its possession about Rwandans accused of genocide.

21. Stop demonising the RPF in public communications and as an act of good faith begin a frank debate on the true responsibility for the genocide and Rwanda's tragedy.

**Nairobi/Brussels, 23 May 2003**