

H.E. Mr. Martin Uhomoibhi,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
President of the UN Human Rights Council
Room A-576
Palais des Nations
8-14 Avenue de la Paix
1211 Geneva 10

Geneva, 17 November 2008

By Fax: 022 917-0490

Excellency,

We are writing to express our grave concern with the current situation in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The civilian toll continues to increase and massive displacement is affecting tens of thousands of civilians, victims of the conflict. There are more than 250,000 new internally displaced persons (IDPs) since heavy fighting resumed in late August, making the total number of IDPs in North Kivu now over one million. Our organisations are seriously concerned about the escalation of killings, sexual violence and looting. The suffering is compounded by the devastating consequences of the lack of access to food, shelter and medication affecting civilians.

We urge the UN Human Rights Council to urgently convene a Special Session on the “human rights situation in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo”. The United Nations must take immediate steps to respond to this crisis, and the Human Rights Council should use the Special Session to foster concrete measures to prevent further violations of human rights and protect those already suffering from violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. One such measure could be the appointment of a Special Envoy for Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo to report on the human rights dimensions of the situation and concrete steps needed to respond to it.

The Human Rights Council has a duty to “address situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations and make recommendations thereon”. The Council is also required to contribute to the prevention of human rights violations and respond promptly to human rights emergencies. The hostilities in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have already taken a devastating toll on civilians; everything possible should be done to prevent further deterioration of an already dire situation. The Human Rights Council must not to turn its back on the victims of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We urge you to use your good offices as President of the Human Rights Council to encourage all Members of the Council to support the prompt organisation of such a Special Session. You can count on our support and cooperation in this endeavour.

Yours sincerely,

African Democracy Forum - ADF
Alliances for Africa - Nigeria
Amnesty International
Arche d'Alliance – République Démocratique du Congo
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development - FORUM-ASIA
Association africaine des droits de l'Homme – ASADHO - République Démocratique du Congo
Association des femmes victimes des violences et des conflits armés – AFEVICA - République Démocratique du Congo
Association des professionnels de santé pour la défense des droits humains du Kivu - République Démocratique du Congo
Association de promotion des droits de l'enfant - APRDODES - République Démocratique du Congo
APESKI - République Démocratique du Congo
Association of Justice, Peace and Democracy - AJPD - Angola
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies - CIHRS
Centre Olamé – Service Diocésain de Promotion Féminine – Bukavu - République Démocratique du Congo
Collectif des associations de lutte contre la torture - CALCOT - République Démocratique du Congo
Comité d'action pour la défense des droits de l'homme - CADHO – République Démocratique du Congo
Community Law Centre - South Africa
Constitutional Rights Project - Nigeria
Constitutional Rights Project - Zimbabwe
Democracy Coalition Project - DCP
East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network – EHAHRDN
Fédération Internationale des ligues des Droits de l'Homme - FIDH
Fondation Humanus - Cameroon
Groupe Lotus - République Démocratique du Congo
Human Rights Institute of South Africa - HURISA
Human Rights Watch
International Commission of Jurists
Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa – IHRDA
Ligue des Droits de l'Homme de la Région du Grand Lac - République Démocratique du Congo, Burundi, Rwanda
Ligues des électeurs - République Démocratique du Congo
Ligue Nationale des Droits de l'Homme - Cameroun
National Counselling Centre – NCC - Angola

Open Society Institute - OSI
Prisoners Rehabilitation And Welfare Action – PRAWA - Nigeria
Rencontre Africaine pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme - RADDHO - Sénégal
Réseau des associations de protection des droits de l'enfant - RAPDE - République
Démocratique du Congo
Réseau Ouest Africain des Défenseurs des droits de l'homme - ROADH
Réseau des défenseurs des droits humains en Afrique centrale – REDHAC - Gabon,
République Démocratique du Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Chad, Republic of Congo, Cameroon,
Central-African Republic.
Service œcuménique pour la paix - SEP
Solidarité aux femmes paysannes pour le développement communautaire - SOFEPDEC -
République Démocratique du Congo
Solidarité aux femmes veuves défavorisées - SOFEVED - République Démocratique du Congo
Solidarité pour la Promotion des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples – PRODOP - Cameroun
Southern Africa Centre For Survivor of Torture
West African Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons Network - WARIPNET
Zimbabwe Exile Forum
Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights - ZLHR