

## **The Elders call for dialogue and accountability to end worsening conflict in DR Congo**

**04 February 2025**

The Elders today voice our alarm at the rapid advances made by M23 rebels and Rwandan forces in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which risk escalating into an even bloodier regional conflict.

We call for effective dialogue to extend the M23 rebels' unilateral ceasefire into a full and lasting cessation of hostilities. This must include the immediate withdrawal of all Rwandan troops, accountability for atrocity crimes against civilians, and the DRC government taking more action to protect its civilians and ensure the rule of law.

The international community has neglected this conflict for too long. It has not been vocal enough in calling for the immediate withdrawal of Rwandan troops, and an end to its long-standing support for the M23 rebel movement.

The Elders echo the call by UN Secretary-General António Guterres for the immediate withdrawal of Rwandan forces. All parties must respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The DRC government bears ultimate responsibility for the security of its citizens and must make this its top priority.

We urge President Tshisekedi of the DRC and President Kagame of Rwanda to participate constructively in dialogue, and prioritise saving lives. Regional initiatives such as the Nairobi and Luanda negotiation processes, sponsored by the East African Community and the African Union respectively, can only succeed with a commitment by all parties to a pathway to peace. Full engagement from African leaders is essential for any lasting progress.

This is more likely if the international community applies serious pressure -- as the USA did to Rwanda in 2012, when M23 forces first occupied Goma, leading to a temporary de-escalation. At that time, the international community also engaged in dialogue under the Addis Ababa Framework. Similar comprehensive and coordinated efforts are needed again now.

The Elders are appalled at the human cost of this conflict. We call for the protection of humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel. Over 25 million people are in need of humanitarian

assistance and over 9 million are displaced, while women and girls continue to experience horrific levels of conflict-related sexual violence.

There must be an end to impunity for such crimes, both for the perpetrators and their political and military sponsors. We welcome the decision by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in late 2024 to renew investigations in the DRC, and call on all parties to support the Court's vital work.

The conflict has been fuelled by the desire to control critical minerals, now increasingly needed across the world for mobile telecommunications and the green energy transition.

Businesses and consumers also have a responsibility to ensure global prosperity does not come on the back of conflict, exploitation and human rights abuses.

Civilians in eastern DRC have paid a terrible price over the last three decades for this devastating conflict. It must be brought to an end.

ENDS

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[Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Ricardo Lagos](#) and [Muhammad Yunus](#) are Elders Emeritus.

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