

Eastern Congo: an action plan to end the world's deadliest war

Activist Brief

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The world's deadliest war and most pronounced use of rape as a weapon continue to rage in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Enough Project's latest report on eastern Congo, by Co-founder John Prendergast and analyst Noel Atama, argues that this multi-layered and immensely complex conflict can only end when the international community abandons its piecemeal approach to conflict management and adopts a new approach that focuses on five basic tasks: protecting civilians, implementing an effective counterinsurgency strategy against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, or FDLR, ending the trade in conflict minerals, promoting regional peace and economic cooperation, and promoting accountability.

Eastern Congo Aflame

The situation on the ground remains catastrophic. An offensive by the Congolese army, backed by United Nations peacekeepers, against Rwandan FDLR rebels in North and South Kivu, has led to a spike in human rights violations by Congolese troops and the FDLR, which stands for Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda. The Ugandan rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army also continues to prey upon civilians.

The Creeping Toll of Sexual Violence

Systematic rape is being used in the Congo for retribution, social control, and punishment against those deemed supportive of opposing armed groups. Incidents of rape are increasing, and impunity is so ingrained that violence against women is being used by civilians to demonstrate power relations. A durable peace is the only way to reduce this violence.

Conflict Minerals: Fuel for Unending War

Illegitimate trading/taxation of minerals and the crisis in Congo are directly connected. The government army and various rebel groups compete to control mines, trade centers, tax routes, customs rackets, and smuggling opportunities, providing funds that allow the continuation of campaigns of violence. Thus, such illegal trade has a self-sustaining rationale.

The FDLR: still turning a profit

The FDLR remains in eastern Congo, especially South Kivu, funding its operations through smuggling and taxation. The FDLR buys many weapons from the Congolese army, and many of the illegitimate minerals it sells are sold alongside minerals from government-controlled mines.

Five tasks to end the deadliest conflict in the world

- 1. Protect civilians** by reforming the Congolese army, embedding MONUC personnel in government army units directly, and having the U.N. Security focus MONUC's capacity specifically to protect civilians.
- 2. Implement a comprehensive counter-insurgency strategy for the FDLR:**
 - The Rwandan government should declare which FDLR leaders are wanted for genocide and negotiate exit options with them.
 - Political leaders in the Diaspora who support the FDLR should be prosecuted
 - Kimia II should be suspended and the international community, Kinshasa and MONUC should plan for more effective military pressure on the FDLR
 - The Congolese government must secure and legitimize all mining operations.
- 3. End the trade in conflict minerals** through an integrated, open supply chain that demands conflict-free minerals and allows economic development in the Congo.
- 4. Promote regional peace and economic cooperation:** Relationship between Rwanda, Congo, and other nearby states should be further improved.
- 5. Promote accountability** by having donors increase investment to reform Congo's justice system, having the Congolese army held accountable for abuses of women and girls, encouraging the International Criminal Court to investigate sexual violence in the Kivus, and by countering incentives for illegitimate economic gain through sanctions, etc.

Take Action

Call or write your [Senators](#) and urge them to cosponsor the Congo Conflict Minerals Act of 2009. Call them by dialing the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and asking for your senators' office or write them an email through our campaign website at www.raisehopeforcongo.org.

Endorse the conflict minerals pledge to build pressure on electronics companies to verify their products do not contain conflict minerals. You can also text "CONGOLEDGE" (one word, no spaces) to ACTION (228466). Visit http://www.raisehopeforcongo.org/conflictminerals_pledge for more information.