

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington DC 20210

Dear Secretary Rice:

I am writing out of concern for the number of civilians who continue to be killed, mutilated and tortured in the ongoing violence in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Because the US is a member of the UN Security Council, which authorized the United Nations Organization Mission in the DRC (MONUC) force, I urge you to ensure that MONUC fully implements its newly reinforced mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and intervenes to effectively protect civilian lives in the region.

Under its mandate, MONUC is responsible for protecting civilians, with particular attention to vulnerable groups including women, children and demobilized child soldiers. Throughout the conflict, all parties have used rape and other forms of sexual violence as weapons of war. In many cases, the deliberate wounding or killing of victims follows these acts of sexual violence. There are reports that many girls have been forcibly driven to serve on the frontlines and have been routinely raped and used as sexual slaves by adult commanders.

UN peacekeeping forces have been present in the DRC since February 2000 under UN Resolution 1291 (2000), but have largely failed to adequately protect civilians from suffering and deprivation of life. In July 2003, under UN Resolution 1493, MONUC was given an expanded mandate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, authorizing UN troops to take all necessary means, including use of force, to secure the safety of civilians in Ituri and the Kivu provinces of eastern DRC.

While I welcome these developments, MONUC's ability to intervene effectively to prevent further abuses remains a significant concern. Insufficient deployment of troops in conflict areas and lack of adequate training severely hamper the implementation of its mandate. Peacekeeping forces should also be deployed throughout all districts of eastern Congo where there is a risk of armed clashes in order to prevent further escalation of the crisis and human rights violations.

I ask you to take every measure possible to end the human rights abuses occurring in the DRC and to urge the UN Security Council to take every necessary step to support MONUC in providing sufficient combat personnel, equipment and training to fulfill its mission successfully. Thank you for your attention to this human rights concern.

Sincerely,