

FDLR links to Habyarimana’s son raise regional security concerns - report

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Jean Luc Habyarimana.

A new independent investigation has confirmed the active presence of the Kinshasa-backed FDLR militia in Uvira, a town in DR Congo’s South Kivu Province.

The findings, released by the International Consortium for Human Rights in Congo (CIDHC), cover events from 2024 to March this year, and point to significant security, legal, and diplomatic risks for the region due to the presence of the FDLR, a UN and US-sanctioned group linked to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

On March 3, the genocidal FDLR militia issued an official statement from Uvira, which

confirmed their active presence on Congolese soil and the establishment of their High Command in Uvira.

The statement also congratulated President Felix Tshisekedi, expressed support for Congolese institutions, and justified its activities as a struggle against what it calls Rwanda’s “hegemonic ambitions.”

The FDLR is part of the Congolese government coalition that is fighting the AFC/M23 rebels and Uvira remains its main stronghold in South Kivu.

According to the Congolese rights group, the fact that an armed group listed on several international sanctions lists can make a political statement from a government-controlled area is “a serious matter requiring thorough examination.”

Sources also indicate that President Tshisekedi and the family of former Rwandan leader Juvénal Habyarimana, based in France, may be collaborating on a political and security strategy that could leverage FDLR to exert pressure on Rwanda.

This plan is reportedly structured across political, military, diplomatic, and communi-

cation axes.

The findings also point to potential plans for a high-level meeting in Kinshasa in early 2026. The meeting is intended to “establish a permanent coordination framework between armed movements and political platforms in exile; adopt a common strategic roadmap; and designate a unified political command structure,” with the aim of increasing political and security pressure on Rwanda.

Habyarimana’s son Jean Luc is reportedly considered a potential leader or symbolic figure for FDLR and associated opposition networks.

His role is said to include rallying parts of the Rwandan diaspora, representing continuity for historical networks, and acting as an interface between exiled political figures and armed structures in eastern DR Congo.

He reportedly participated via videoconference in preparatory meetings, such as one in Cape Town, South Africa in October 2025, suggesting a consultative or strategic leadership role.

Other opposition figures reportedly involved include Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa, leader of the Rwanda National Congress (RNC), and Thomas Nahimana, president of the Ishema Party. Nyamwasa and Nahimana, as well as FDLR leaders are sanctioned by the Rwandan government for terrorism.

The FDLR, which was created by remnants of perpetrators of the Genocide against the Tutsi, is also said to be mobilising financial resources to reorganise its command structures.

The findings suggest the group may be receiving indirect logistical support through

cross-border economic networks, assistance with travel and strategic meetings, and help with recruitment, including among diaspora communities.

Former combatants interviewed by CIDHC at Mutobo Demobilisation Centre in Muzanze District in February said FDLR leaders maintain networks and logistical operations across DR Congo, including movements across several provinces, occasional stays in Kinshasa, and urban support networks that facilitate travel, economic activity, and logistics.

Some reported coordination with Congolese forces in operations against other rebel groups.

They noted that FDLR exploits natural resources to fund its activities, including charcoal production, forest exploitation, taxation of local populations, seizure of crops, and mining in various sites and quarries.

CIDHC warns that any alliance with FDLR could be “a major factor of instability for the region” and a “threat to peace and security in the Great Lakes region.”

The report called for an impartial international investigation to establish the material facts, assess the level of institutional involvement, and evaluate the legal and diplomatic ramifications.

The authors of the report argue that the findings could lead to “prosecution of individuals before national or international courts, engagement of the international responsibility of the Congolese state, imposition of diplomatic or economic sanctions, and deterioration of the regional security framework.”