



***For immediate release***

**Statement by Alice Wairimu Nderitu, Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, condemning the escalation in fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

(New York, 30 November 2022) Following her official visit to the Democratic republic of Congo from 10-13 November 2022, United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Alice Wairimu Nderitu is deeply alarmed about the escalation of violence in the Great Lakes Region where a genocide - the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda – happened. “The current violence is a warning sign of societal fragility and proof of the enduring presence of the conditions that allowed large-scale hatred and violence to erupt into a genocide in the past” she said. Her visit followed a technical-level mission by her Office that established that indicators and triggers contained in the [UN Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes](#) were present in DRC including; dissemination of hate speech and absence of independent mechanisms to address it; politicization of identity; proliferation of local militias and other armed groups across the country; widespread and systematic attacks, including sexual violence, against especially the Banyamulenge on the basis of their ethnicity and perceived allegiance with neighboring countries; and intergroup tensions.

The Special Adviser is also deeply concerned about ongoing inter communal violence in Western DRC between the Suku, Mbala, Yansi, Songe, Luba, Kongo, Yaka and Teke ethnic communities. Several people have been injured and killed, numerous homes looted and burned and the FARDC have been attacked.

In Eastern DRC, the current violence mainly stems from the refugee crisis that resulted as many individuals involved in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda fled to Eastern DRC, forming armed groups such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda / *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR) which is still active in Eastern DRC, the Special Adviser said. In response to the presence of this armed group, new armed groups were formed and the failure to bring non-state armed actors to book is the consequence we now see, she added. The Special Adviser noted that finding a solution to the ongoing conflict in Eastern DRC would require addressing the underlying causes of the violence and learning lessons from the past. “The abuses currently occurring in Eastern DRC, including the targeting of civilians based on their ethnicity or perceived affiliation to the warring parties must be halted. Our collective commitment not to forget past atrocities constitutes an obligation to prevent re-occurrence”, the Special Adviser stressed.

Reiterating her 17 June 2022 statement issued jointly with then High Commissioner for Human Rights Michele Bachelet, Special Adviser Wairimu Nderitu expressed particular concern about the impact on civilians of the recent increase in hostilities between the M23 armed group and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo / *Forces armées de la république démocratique du Congo* (FARDC). The statement had also expressed concern over an escalation of hate speech and incitement to discrimination, hostility, and violence nationwide – and specifically against the Kinyarwanda speaking Banyamulenge people. They noted reports that hate speech had been spread by political party figures, community leaders, civil society actors, and members of the Congolese diaspora.

The Special Adviser stated that the situation in both the East and West was particularly alarming while the DRC was preparing for national elections in 2023.

During the visit to DRC, the Special Adviser emphasized her continuous support towards strengthening existing prevention mechanisms, such as operationalising the DRC's National Committee for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity and all Forms of Discrimination. The National Committee was established under the auspices of the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) in accordance with the ICGLR Pact on Security, Stability and Development. Under the Protocol, ICGLR Member States are required to domesticate and enforce its provisions by putting in place laws that will prevent and punish genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity; measures that will eliminate discrimination; teach and encourage tolerance among national, racial, and ethnic groups; combat impunity and extradite criminals, the Special Adviser recalled.

The Special Adviser reiterated that while the primary responsibility to prevent atrocity crimes rests with the DRC as a State, all parties to the violent conflict must work urgently towards finding a political solution that will bring comprehensive and sustainable peace to the DRC by addressing the root causes of divisions and violence, and the legitimate concerns of all actors. The Special Adviser also echoed calls by the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on 30 October 2022 for an immediate de-escalation of hostilities to ensure protection of civilians and respect for international humanitarian law. Moreover, she commended the ongoing efforts by the African Union and East African Communities towards restoring a climate of trust and creating conditions for dialogue and political consultations to address the security crisis.

The Special Adviser urged the United Nations to continue supporting inter-communal reconciliation initiatives led by the DRC Government, civil society actors religious and community leaders. The Special Adviser also emphasized that her Office remained available to support national religious dialogue processes in DRC aimed at fostering atrocity prevention, in line with the [Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that could lead to Atrocity Crimes](#) (Fez Plan of Action). The Special Adviser also commended the Government of the DRC for implementing a transitional justice programme which would no doubt respond to accountability and justice.

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