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HATE SPEECH AND VIOLENCE **STATUS REPORT IN DRC (2021-2024)**



Never Again Rwanda, January 2025

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACP:	Alliance Commune pour la République
AFCD:	Alliance of Democratic Change Forces
APCLS:	Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo
CSAC:	Higher Council of Audiovisual and Communication
DRC:	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC:	East African Community
FAR:	Forces Armées Rwandaises (Former Rwandan Armed Forces)
FARDC:	Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
FDLR:	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
FAZ:	Zairian Armed Forces
FPIC:	Front for Patriotic Integration of Congo
LUCHA:	Lutte pour le Changement (Struggle for Change)
M23:	March 23 Movement
MAGRIVI:	Mutuelle des Agriculteurs de Virunga (Virunga's Farmers Movement)
MNC:	National Movement of Congo
MONUSCO:	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
NAR:	Never Again Rwanda
OHCHR:	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PNC:	National Congolese Police
RTNC:	National Congolese Radio and Television
RTLm:	Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines
UDPS:	Union for Democracy and Social Progress
UN:	United Nations
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) faces an alarming escalation of hate speech across multiple platforms, threatening its social fabric and peace-building efforts. This comprehensive analysis examines the nature, dissemination patterns, and impacts of hate speech through social media networks, traditional media channels, public addresses, and community gatherings.

The persistence and proliferation of hate speech have emerged as a significant concern, intensifying the already fragile socio-political environment. Inflammatory rhetoric plays a considerable role in fueling cycles of violence, perpetuating systemic discrimination, and entrenching deep-seated ethnic divides (UN Group of Experts 2023)¹.

This targeted discrimination has disproportionately affected marginalized groups, particularly Congolese Tutsis, significantly increasing the risk of violence against these communities. Social media platforms have become primary vectors for the dissemination of hateful content, while traditional media and public discourse often echo and validate divisive narratives (UNESCO 2024a)². Public speeches delivered by influential figures, including Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi, members of his cabinet, and parliamentarians, have directly incited violence or endorsed exclusionary policies. These practices undermine social cohesion and weaken trust in institutions meant to uphold justice and equality.

The situation demands comprehensive interventions focused on strengthening legal frameworks to ensure accountability for perpetrators. Educational initiatives must raise awareness about the harmful consequences of inflammatory rhetoric while promoting counter-narratives that encourage tolerance and inclusivity.

Success requires collaborative efforts involving government entities, civil society organizations, media platforms, and international stakeholders to address the root causes of hate speech and prevent further harm.

¹ UN Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo. 2023. "Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo." S/2023/782.

² UNESCO. 2024. "Ce qu'il faut savoir sur les discours de haine." <https://www.unesco.org/fr/countering-hate-speech/need-know>

This report aims to mobilize concerted action to protect vulnerable communities and foster a peaceful, inclusive society in the DRC. Through detailed documentation and analysis of hate speech incidents, the report illuminates the urgent need for systematic intervention to combat this pervasive threat to social stability and human rights.

INTRODUCTION

This comprehensive report emerges from Never Again Rwanda's ongoing mission to prevent genocide and foster social cohesion in the Great Lakes Region. Hate speech—characterized as hostile, discriminatory, and dehumanizing language targeting people based on their identity—represents a persistent threat to peace and stability. Historical examples demonstrate its devastating impact: antisemitic propaganda fueled the Holocaust, racist rhetoric enabled Jim Crow laws and segregation in the United States, and hate media like RTLM radio catalyzed the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. The systematic documentation and analysis of hate speech incidents in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) serve as crucial steps toward understanding and addressing this pervasive challenge.

The manifestation of hate speech in the DRC represents a potent catalyst for violence and social division, with particularly devastating consequences for marginalized communities. The targeting of Congolese Tutsis through inflammatory rhetoric has intensified ethnic tensions and undermined social harmony, creating patterns of discrimination that threaten the fabric of Congolese society. This report demonstrates how hate speech serves as both a precursor to and an enabler of physical violence, systematic discrimination, and social exclusion.

Our analysis encompasses multiple dimensions of hate speech, examining its manifestations, trends, and the various actors involved in its propagation. Through rigorous documentation of specific incidents and careful analysis of broader patterns, this report illuminates the scope and scale of hate speech's impact on Congolese society. Special attention focuses on the role of social media platforms, traditional media outlets, and public figures in amplifying discriminatory messages and inflammatory rhetoric.

The findings presented here underscore the critical importance of addressing hate speech as a proactive strategy for conflict prevention. This approach aligns with Never Again Rwanda's broader vision of creating a region where respect for diversity and human dignity form the foundation of sustainable peace. Through a detailed examination of hate speech incidents and their impacts, this report provides essential insights for policymakers, civil society organizations, and international partners working to combat discrimination and promote peaceful coexistence.

The documentation and analysis contained within these pages aim to support evidence-based interventions and informed policymaking. This report serves as a resource for advocacy efforts aimed at combating hate speech in the DRC while simultaneously highlighting the urgent need for coordinated action to protect vulnerable communities and promote inclusive dialogue. Through a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to counter hate speech and its destructive effects on social cohesion.

BACKGROUND

The foundation of contemporary ethnic tensions in the Democratic Republic of Congo traces back to deep structural weaknesses inherited from the colonial era (Persée 1991)³. The Belgian colonial administration's 'divide and rule' system deliberately created and exploited ethnic divisions through systematic categorization in official records, including identity cards and census documents. This administrative classification of ethnic groups established rigid boundaries between communities and created a framework of discrimination that would persist long after independence. (Van Vulpen 2023)⁴. This colonial legacy and post-independence political manipulation has created enduring obstacles to establishing an inclusive and equitable nation. The post-independence period witnessed the intensification of colonial-era divisions as emerging political actors manipulated ethnic identities for political gain. Power struggles among various groups created fertile ground for

secessionist movements and sparked widespread tribal violence, fundamentally destabilizing the young nation's social fabric.

The complex demographic landscape of eastern DRC emerged through careful orchestrated colonial policies.

The Belgian administration actively encouraged immigration from neighboring territories. They particularly brought Kinyarwanda-speaking populations to serve as labor in mining operations and agricultural developments, particularly in resource-rich regions where minerals and agricultural potential drove colonial economic interests, creating a complex linguistic and cultural tapestry, especially in cases where immigrant populations shared linguistic traits with native communities. The presence of Kinyarwanda-speaking groups alongside indigenous populations who used the same language created intricate dynamics of identity and belonging, eventually becoming a significant source of interethnic tension.

These ethnic tensions reached a critical point in 1965 with the eruption of the "Kinyarwanda War" in North Kivu. This conflict marked a significant escalation in the systematic exclusion of the Banyarwanda population from political participation. Local political actors orchestrated this exclusion through a calculated campaign that labeled the Banyarwanda as "Rwandan immigrants," "non-indigenous," or "non-native," effectively denying them participation in the first democratic elections.

The violence perpetrated against the Banyarwanda community, particularly targeting Congolese Tutsis, inflicted deep psychological wounds on the collective consciousness of these populations. President Mobutu's regime compounded this trauma through policies of impunity that protected the perpetrators of anti-Banyarwanda violence. While Mobutu maintained superficial stability through authoritarian control, his administration failed to address the fundamental antagonism between self-proclaimed "Autochthonous Kivutian" (claiming indigenous status) politicians and the Congolese Banyarwanda community, whom they persistently characterized as "Rwandan Immigrants."

The situation grew increasingly complex following the AFDL uprising in 1996 and the Second Congo War (1998-2003), which further amplified hostility toward Congolese Tutsis. These conflicts

3 Persée. 1991. "La question de la nationalité au Kivu." https://www.persee.fr/doc/polaf_0244-7827_1991_num_41_1_5445

4 Van Vulpen, Judith. 2023. "Boundary-Making in the Congolese Conflict." https://studenttheses.uu.nl/bitstream/handle/20.500.12932/47593/Thesis_Judith%20van%20Vulpen_8792291.pdf

intensified existing ethnic tensions and created new patterns of discrimination that would persist long after the formal cessation of hostilities.

The situation deteriorated further when Mobutu's government-issued mandates stripping the Banyarwanda of their Congolese nationality, a move intended to appease political tensions within his regime. These legislative actions effectively institutionalized anti-Banyarwanda discrimination in Kivu, representing what many scholars consider the "officialization of anti-Banyarwanda hatred." The historical roots of this complex situation extends back to the 1910 colonial agreements between German, Belgian, and British authorities. These agreements established borders that left significant Banyarwanda populations (encompassing Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa groups) in eastern DRC regions such as Rutshuru, Masisi, and Nyiragongo. Historical records also document the 18th-century settlement of Tutsi communities in the high and middle plateaus of South Kivu, where they became known as the Banyamulenge.

The regional dynamics grew increasingly complex as tribal conflicts in Rwanda from 1959 onward profoundly influenced the violence experienced by the Banyarwanda in Kivu. The post-independence Rwandan regimes under Presidents Grégoire Kayibanda and Juvénal Habyarimana strategically cultivated alliances with Congolese Hutus in North Kivu and Kalehe in South Kivu, positioning these relationships as counterweights to Tutsi influence. This deliberate political maneuvering deepened existing divisions among the Banyarwanda communities in Kivu.

The situation reached new levels of complexity following the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda when Interahamwe militants and former Rwandan armed forces (FAR) members fled into eastern DRC. These groups discovered an environment already primed with anti-Tutsi sentiment, largely due to the activities of MAGRIVI, a Virunga-based agricultural cooperative dominated by "Congolese Hutu extremists." MAGRIVI's operations, which received support from Rwandan officials in the 1980s, had systematically spread anti-Tutsi propaganda throughout eastern DRC as part of a broader strategy to reinforce President Habyarimana's political system.

The weakening state apparatus in the DRC created opportunities for former MAGRIVI

members to forge dangerous alliances with Interahamwe forces and local militias, receiving support from the Zairian Armed Forces (FAZ) during the critical periods of 1994, 1997, and 1998. These coalitions targeted Congolese Tutsis and any rebellions perceived as potentially connected to Congolese Tutsi interests. This pattern of targeted violence and discrimination persists today, serving as a primary driver of hate speech and continuing violence against Tutsis in the DRC.

SCOPE OF MONITORING AND METHODOLOGY

The monitoring process for this report encompasses a comprehensive framework designed to capture the full spectrum of hate speech manifestation across the Democratic Republic of Congo. This methodical approach thoroughly explains how hate speech spreads through various channels and the contextual factors influencing its manifestation.

Areas of Focus

Never Again Rwanda's monitoring efforts concentrate on four primary communication domains where hate speech frequently emerges and spreads:

Social media platforms. This area is critical for monitoring hate speech content in posts, comments, videos, and hashtags. Analyzing these digital interactions, we can identify patterns in the online propagation of inflammatory rhetoric and its impact across various demographic groups.

Traditional media outlets. This includes radio broadcasts, television programs, and print publications. These established channels significantly shape public opinion and can either amplify or counter hate speech narratives. Our monitoring carefully documents how these outlets present and frame sensitive issues related to ethnic identity and conflict.

Public speeches and statements. We focus on addresses from political leaders, community figures, and influential personalities, paying close attention to any language that promotes hostility, discrimination, or violence. These public pronouncements often carry substantial weight in legitimizing or challenging discriminatory narratives.

Community-level discourse. This encompasses discussions within local settings, informal gatherings, and grassroots communication networks. Monitoring at this level provides valuable insights into how hate speech manifests in everyday interactions and influences local community dynamics.

METHODOLOGY

At the core of our data collection process is a network of trained monitors stationed across key regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo, especially in North Kivu, South Kivu, and other strategic locations. These field teams, comprised of local researchers and human rights monitors, work directly within communities to document incidents, collect testimonies, and verify reported cases of hate speech. Their physical presence enables real-time monitoring of public gatherings, community meetings, and local media broadcasts, providing crucial ground-level verification of incidents that might otherwise go unreported.

Our monitors employ standardized documentation protocols, capturing detailed information about each incident through direct observations of public speeches and community gatherings, in-person verification of reported incidents, and physical evidence collection. The photographic documentation featured throughout this report was provided by our field teams, who captured visual evidence of incidents, demonstrations, and their aftermath while maintaining strict verification protocols. This ground-level data collection is complemented by digital monitoring tools that track online content. Combining physical presence, photographic evidence, and digital surveillance ensures comprehensive coverage of hate speech manifestations across all platforms.

The process includes rigorous verification procedures, with each incident cross-referenced through multiple sources to confirm authenticity and context. Field teams coordinate with digital monitors to establish connections between online hate speech and its real-world manifestations. This methodical approach ensures reliability in the findings and provides a solid foundation for analysis.

Analysis Framework

Our analytical framework examines both the content and impact of hate speech, considering factors such as reach, frequency, and severity of incidents. This comprehensive approach allows for identifying trends across different regions and periods while revealing the interconnections between various forms of hate speech.

The analysis integrates findings from all monitoring domains to understand how hate speech evolves and spreads across different platforms and communities. Examining the relationship between online discourse and physical violence, our framework helps identify patterns of escalation and potential intervention points.

Through this expansive monitoring scope, the report captures the multifaceted nature of hate speech in the DRC and its reach across urban and rural settings. The resulting analysis provides a detailed account of how hate speech spreads, evolves, and impacts different communities nationwide, offering insights for targeted intervention strategies.

CATEGORIZATION OF HATE SPEECH

Hate speech manifests globally through distinct patterns and strategies that transcend geographical boundaries. Common manifestations include the deliberate dehumanization of target groups through animal metaphors, the spread of conspiracy theories about supposed hidden loyalties or agendas, the use of historically loaded terms to trigger prejudices, and the systematic denial of citizenship or belonging. These universal patterns often precede and accompany violence against marginalized communities, as evidenced in numerous historical contexts, from the Holocaust to the Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsi.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, these global patterns of hate speech find specific expression through multiple rhetorical strategies serving harmful functions: identifying scapegoats, reinforcing stereotypes, perpetuating stigma, and deploying dehumanizing language (UNESCO 2024a)⁵, particularly targeting the Congolese Tutsi population. States hold obligations under Article

⁵ UNESCO. 2024. "Ce qu'il faut savoir sur les discours de haine." <https://www.unesco.org/fr/countering-hate-speech/need-know>

20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to prohibit the most serious forms of hate speech that incite violence, hostility, discrimination, genocide, or other violations of international law.

Content Analysis and Rhetorical Strategies

The most prevalent strategy involves the deliberate mischaracterization of Congolese Tutsis as “foreigners” or “infiltrators,” effectively denying their citizenship and belonging. Political leaders and public figures frequently employ terms like “Rwandan agents” or “spies,” creating false narratives of divided loyalties that endanger these communities. This rhetoric has evolved to include dehumanizing language, with perpetrators comparing Tutsis to “snakes” and using other animal metaphors to strip them of their humanity.

Such language closely mirrors rhetoric used in previous genocidal contexts, particularly the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda, raising serious concerns about potential escalation.

Military Conflict as Catalyst

The resurgence of the M23 rebellion in eastern DRC’s North Kivu province exemplifies how military conflicts amplify hate speech and incitement to violence (RFI 2022)⁶. Civil society actors, citizen movements, journalists, and political leaders mobilized inflammatory rhetoric while organizing civilian support for military operations. This escalation manifested in May 2022, when North Kivu’s provincial police commissioner called

for families to take up machetes against “the enemy” during a parade at Goma’s Afa Stadium, characterizing Tutsis as “enemies of the republic seeking to balkanize the DRC.” The commissioner’s rhetoric prompted civilians in Goma and Kasai to produce videos brandishing machetes and issuing threats to Rwanda.

Institutional Amplification

The situation intensified through institutional channels as M23 advanced toward Kibumba in Nyiragongo territory. Multiple organizations—including Lucha RDC, Filimbi, Veranda Mutsanga,

civil society groups, opposition parties, and the presidential majority (Union Sacrée)—orchestrated demonstrations supporting FARDC and allied armed groups like Mai-Mai, Nyatura, and FDLR. These demonstrations featured explicit hate speech, such as the June 15, 2022, chant in Goma’s Himbi district: “Félix Fungula Mulango Banyarwanda Bote Baradudiye Kwabo” (“Félix, open the borders, all Banyarwanda return home to Rwanda”). The rhetoric rapidly transformed into physical violence, with demonstrators targeting Congolese Tutsis, individuals with Tutsi physical features, and their properties as “enemies of the DRC.” Actions included systematic looting of shops, destruction of churches, and implementation of “facial checks” at vehicle checkpoints. The violence reached its apex during demonstrations led by the major political party, the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS), resulting in the lynching, burning, and cannibalization of a Congolese Tutsi from the Banyamulenge community near a police station without intervention.

Geographic and Institutional Spread

The campaign of intimidation demonstrated strategic geographic expansion beyond its initial focal points. In Kileleshwa, Kinshasa, UDPS distributed leaflets demanding Banyamulenge’s departure within six days under threat of death. Simultaneously, the UDPS in Kinshasa institutionalized discrimination through “Operation Zolo Molayi” (Long Nose), systematically mapping Tutsi residences and deploying machete-wielding members for targeted searches.

Political Legitimization

Political figures provided legitimacy to discriminatory practices. Otto Bahizi, a prime ministerial advisor, advocated for “a coalition of Bantu against Tutsis” while attempting to create artificial linguistic divisions by promoting “Kihutu” as distinct from Kinyarwanda. Military governor Lt. General Constat Ndimba’s endorsement of these views during an official press conference exemplified state-level support for discriminatory narratives.

⁶ Radio France Internationale (RFI). 2022. “RDC: situation toujours tendue à Goma après les violences contre des rwandophones.” <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20220622-rdc-situation-toujours-tendue-a-goma-apres-les-violences-contre-des-rwandophones>

Systematic Exclusion through State Mechanisms

The Campaign to “Derwandalize Public Institutions” launched by National Deputy Eliezer Ntambwe represented a systematic escalation in institutional discrimination. Higher Education Minister Muhindo Nzangi’s denial of Congolese Tutsi refugees’ existence, despite documented evidence of over 100,000 refugees in Rwanda demonstrated how state institutions reinforced discriminatory narratives.

Electoral Process Manipulation

The electoral process became another mechanism for systematic exclusion, with Congolese Tutsis denied voter registration based on manufactured allegations of dual loyalty (ReliefWeb 2023)⁷. State-sanctioned vigilante groups prevented registration and conducted arbitrary arrests.

President Tshisekedi’s campaign rhetoric promising the elimination of “traitors” in the army, combined with UDPS officials branding Tutsis as “killers,” showcased how electoral politics amplified discriminatory narratives.

Media Amplification

Media outlets systematically spread hate speech through coordinated campaigns. False stories about “Tutsi spies,” including the circulation of misidentified images of Ethiopian women labeled as Rwandan agents, mirrored tactics used by RTLM radio before the 1994 genocide. These media strategies demonstrated sophisticated manipulation of public opinion through coordinated disinformation campaigns.

Material and Human Impact

The consequences of these categorized hate speech patterns manifested in severe material and human costs. The documentation reveals:

- Arbitrary detention of hundreds of Congolese Tutsis without due process
- Systematic looting of over 700,000 cattle, undermining economic stability and cultural heritage

⁷ ReliefWeb. 2023. “En RD Congo, le ciblage ethnique perturbe le processus électoral.” <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/en-rd-congo-le-ciblage-ethnique-perturbe-le-processus-electoral>

- Forced displacement of more than 7,000 Congolese Tutsis to refugee camps in Rwanda
- Destruction of villages and communal infrastructure
- Legitimization of violence through presidential praise for militant groups as “patriots and heroes”

These impacts demonstrate how categorized forms of hate speech translated into systematic persecution with profound implications for regional stability and human rights.

CASES OF HATE SPEECH MESSAGES

The documentation of hate speech incidents in the Democratic Republic of Congo from 2022 through 2024 reveals an alarming progression from inflammatory rhetoric to systematic persecution. Government representatives and security forces emerged as significant sources of hate speech, with their statements often preceding escalations in violence.

Documented Incidents from Public Officials

A particularly concerning trend emerges in the official discourse of government representatives and security forces. In May 2022, ABA VAN ANG, then Provincial Commissioner of the PNC in North Kivu, publicly called for civilians to take up machetes against “the enemy... the infiltrators.” This inflammatory rhetoric from a senior security official represented a dangerous escalation in official discourse. Rather than facing the consequences, ABA VAN ANG was promoted to Major General and National Commissioner of Administrative Police in April 2023, signaling institutional tolerance for such incitement. His subsequent return to Goma in September 2024 coincided with further escalation of anti-Tutsi violence, including acts of lynching and cannibalism against Congolese Tutsis.

President Félix Tshisekedi himself contributed to this concerning pattern through multiple public statements. In interviews with international media, including Le Monde⁸, he characterized

⁸ https://www.lemonde.fr/en/le-monde-africa/article/2024/04/02/felix-tshisekedi-president-of-the-drc-rwanda-is-not-the-only-one-responsible-for-the-congo-s-misfortunes_6667092_124.html

Rwandophones as “traitors” and implied the presence of “Rwandan soldiers” within the Congolese security apparatus. These statements, made without providing specific evidence, effectively targeted Congolese Tutsi soldiers and police officers, many of whom subsequently faced violence, including lynching and other forms of brutal persecution.

Civil Society and Movement-Led Incidents

The period between May 22 and June 13, 2022, witnessed an intensification of hate speech through coordinated efforts of various civil society organizations and movements. LUCHA RDC Movement, MNC, Mai-Mai, FILIMBI, Veranda Mutsanga, and others mobilized supporters through social media, glorifying violence and promoting the use of machetes. This online mobilization culminated in violent street protests in Goma on June 15, 2022, where armed protesters specifically targeted Banyarwanda communities while chanting discriminatory slogans.

Religious and Community Leadership

Religious figures and community leaders also participated in spreading hate speech. Churches predominantly attended by Banyamulenge and Congolese Tutsis faced systematic attacks and demolition, often in the presence of security forces who appeared to facilitate rather than prevent such actions. These incidents highlight the complex interplay between religious institutions, community dynamics, and ethnic targeting.

Diplomatic Sphere

The spread of hate speech extended into diplomatic circles, as exemplified by Professor Ntalaja, DRC’s ambassador to the UN, who publicly accused the UN of pressuring the DRC to integrate Rwandans into the Congolese army. Such statements from diplomatic representatives lent international visibility to unsubstantiated claims that further endangered Congolese Tutsi military personnel⁹.

Justice System Incidents

The justice system itself became a platform for hate speech, as evidenced by statements from Justice Minister MUTAMBA Constant in the Central Prison of Goma. His public

⁹ <https://roape.net/2021/04/20/a-peoples-historian-an-interview-with-georges-nzongola-ntalaja/>

declarations suggesting collective punishment and encouraging the denunciation of alleged “traitors” undermined principles of due process and further endangered vulnerable populations.

Media and Communication Channels

Government media outlets, including RTNC, played a significant role in amplifying hate speech. Communications Minister Patrick Muyaya Katembwe's statements on Télé 50 about “Rwandans paying for their actions”¹⁰ triggered waves of violence against Congolese Tutsis, demonstrating the direct link between official rhetoric and street-level violence.

These documented cases represent a concerning pattern of hate speech emanating from multiple sectors of Congolese society, with serious implications for social cohesion and human rights. The persistence and escalation of such incidents, particularly from official sources, demands urgent attention and intervention.

HATE SPEECH IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN THE DRC

Historical Context and Political Antagonism

The electoral process in the Democratic Republic of Congo historically catalyzes political antagonisms characterized by hate speech. Elections transform into sociological battlegrounds where competing communities clash for political dominance. This dynamic reveals a deeply fragmented society marked by an absence of shared civic values—values that could otherwise renew the political landscape and create pathways toward a more inclusive and equitable nation.

Throughout electoral campaigns, anti-Tutsi rhetoric and themes of “anti-infiltration” consistently target the Banyarwanda community. These individuals face systematic denial of their civic and political rights, with rival candidates routinely labeling them as “Rwandan foreigners.” The historical precedent for this pattern emerged in May 2006, when then vice-president Abdoulaye Yerodia, during a pro-Kabila rally in Goma, publicly attacked the Tutsi ethnic

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/PatMuyaya/videos/-vous-ne-pouvez-pas-vous-pr%C3%A9senter-comme-protecteur-dune-communaut%C3%A9-en-provoquant/495223432540354/>

minority, declaring: "If you don't go back home, we'll shove sticks up your behinds to ensure you leave."¹¹

Unified Anti-Tutsi Rhetoric

The exploitation of hate speech against the Congolese Tutsi community serves as a unifying factor for many candidates despite their political differences. Documentation reveals how "Anti-Tutsi hatred unites Congolese people across civil society, citizen movements, pressure groups, opposition parties, the ruling majority, and local press."¹² This convergence of antagonistic rhetoric transcends traditional political divisions, creating a dangerous consensus around ethnic discrimination.

The 2023 Electoral Process and Violent Nationalism

The 2023 elections witnessed an unprecedented escalation of violent nationalist and xenophobic discourse (Africanews 2023)¹³. Political actors exploited the ongoing conflict in Eastern DRC and the M23 rebellion to gain popular support. President Félix Tshisekedi frequently resorted to hate speech, associating certain candidates with "foreign interests" and endorsing armed Mai-Mai groups (Le Soir 2023)¹⁴. His promises to end "infiltration" within the army and eliminate "traitors" particularly targeted the Banyamulenge and other Tutsi communities.

During the voter registration and election period, Congolese Tutsis faced systematic targeting by extremist youth groups identifying themselves as Wazalendo (Jeune Afrique 2023)¹⁵. Many Tutsis encountered arrest while attempting to obtain voter cards, accused of being Rwandans. The "De-Rwandalization" campaign, led by MP Eliezer Ntambwe, further fueled anti-Tutsi sentiment, creating widespread fear among the Congolese Tutsi community (Afriqactu.net 2023)¹⁶.

11 <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/hrw/1999/en/36109>

12 <https://spectator.clingendael.org/en/publication/anti-tutsi-hate-speech-refuels-conflict-eastern-dr-congo>

13 Africanews. 2023. "Présidentielle en RDC: comment discréditer un candidat?" December 15, 2023.

14 Le Soir. 2023. "Félix Tshisekedi: 'C'est l'armée de Kagame qui se bat chez nous.'" November 18, 2023.

15 Jeune Afrique. 2023. "En RDC, résurgence des discours politiques xénophobes." June 15, 2023.

16 Afriqactu.net. 2023. "Dérwandalisation, plan Ntambwe pour mettre fin à l'insécurité dans l'Est de la RDC." January 25, 2023.

Systematic Voter Suppression

The electoral process revealed patterns of systematic exclusion. Civil society actors and citizen movements actively prevented Tutsis from participating in voter registration. Bénédiction Murhabazi, an active member of Lucha RDC, publicly called for the expulsion of Congolese Tutsis from registration centers. Jean-Paul Lumbulumbu, provincial deputy and vice-president of the North Kivu provincial assembly, demanded heightened vigilance against alleged infiltration.

Vigilance groups, initially formed under presidential direction to combat supposed Rwandan infiltration, reactivated during the electoral process in Goma, systematically preventing Tutsis from registering. Numerous individuals faced arrest at registration centers without cause, demonstrating the institutional nature of discrimination.

Documented Violence and Exclusion

ReliefWeb's documentation captured the extent of ethnic profiling during the electoral process. Banyamulenge (Congolese Tutsis from South Kivu) experienced beatings, threats, and temporary denial of access to registration centers across multiple cities, including Goma, Bukavu, Nyagenzi, and Uvira. Even those who managed to obtain voter cards, often through desperate measures, including bribery, faced renewed violence during the December 2023 elections, effectively preventing their participation.

Government Rhetoric and Media Amplification

President Tshisekedi's campaign appearances, particularly in Uvira, featured inflammatory rhetoric disguised as anti-infiltration messaging. His promises to eliminate "traitors" within the Congolese army, referencing alleged "Rwandan soldiers," reinforced dangerous stereotypes. Government officials routinely labeled Kinyarwanda-speaking individuals as traitors, while UDPS officials like John Mbenza and Joël Kitenge characterized Tutsis as "killers" during pro-regime broadcasts.

The campaign against opposition leader Moïse Katumbi exemplified how personal attacks incorporated ethnic prejudice, with his Tutsi wife's background used to discredit his

candidacy. Media outlets, including *Bosolo na Politique*, *Tokomi Wapi*, and RTNC, systematically disseminated anti-Tutsi rhetoric, deliberately reviving narratives of historical ethnic conflicts.

THE ROLE OF YOUTH AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN PROPAGATING HATE SPEECH

Youth Mobilization and Digital Networks

The digital age presents unique challenges in the Democratic Republic of Congo as younger generations gain unprecedented access to communication technologies. Youth groups actively participate in organized campaigns that promote hate speech through established political affiliations and tribal loyalties. These digital networks enable rapid mobilization for both online harassment and physical violence targeting Congolese Tutsi communities.

Political Youth Wings and Organized Violence

The UDPS youth organization's activities illustrate the dangerous convergence of youth mobilization and organized violence. Their launch of "Operation Zolo Molayi" (Long Nose) in Kinshasa demonstrated sophisticated coordination, including systematically mapping Tutsi residences and neighborhoods. The operation deployed youth members armed with machetes to search for Tutsis, even in areas with active law enforcement presence. Though authorities arrested youth leader Jules Munyere for organizing these demonstrations, his quick release without consequences exemplified the impunity surrounding such actions.

Youth Groups and Community "Vigilance"

Youth-led vigilante groups, initially formed under presidential direction to combat alleged Rwandan infiltration, evolved into instruments of systematic persecution. These groups actively prevented Tutsis from participating in civic activities, including voter registration. Their activities expanded beyond electoral interference to include arbitrary arrests and physical violence, often conducting these actions with implicit official approval.

Digital Amplification of Violence

Social media platforms serve as primary vectors for youth-led hate speech campaigns. The incident involving journalist Daniel Michomebero exemplifies this dynamic, where false information about "beautiful Tutsi spies" allegedly sent from Rwanda to infiltrate Goma spread rapidly through youth networks. These digital campaigns mirror tactics used by RTLM radio before the 1994 Rwandan genocide, demonstrating how modern technology amplifies historical patterns of hate speech.

Coordination with Armed Groups

The Barza Communautaire du Kivu's collaboration with the Congolese government revealed sophisticated coordination between youth groups and armed militias. This council of community leaders actively mobilized youth into armed groups under ethnonationalist, anti-Tutsi campaigns. Their rejection of dialogue with M23, despite its composition of Congolese Tutsis demonstrated how youth mobilization contributed to military escalation.

State Legitimization of Youth Violence

The Congolese government's legitimization of youth participation in "Wazalendo" groups enabled systematic violence against Tutsi communities. This official endorsement concentrated violence in specific regions, including Masisi, Rutshuru, Nyiragongo, Goma, Lubeo (North Kivu), and the high and middle plateaus of South Kivu. Youth leaders within these groups, including figures like Dominique Ndaruhutse and Habyarimana Mbitsemunda of Nyatura, openly declared genocidal intentions to fight until "the last Tutsi is in Rwanda."

Religious Institutions and Youth Mobilization

Religious organizations played a significant role in youth mobilization against Tutsi communities. Following the Catholic Church's call to protest, students from Catholic schools in Bukavu participated in anti-Tutsi demonstrations, chanting "Banyarwanda Bote Barudiye Kwabo" (all Rwandans must go back to their origin) in the presence of religious leaders. This involvement of religious institutions lent legitimacy to youth participation in discriminatory actions.

Impact on Community Relations

Youth involvement in hate speech propagation has created lasting damage to community relations (MONUSCO 2023)¹⁷. The participation of young people in acts of violence, including the documented cases of lynching, burning and cannibalization of Tutsi individuals, represents severe trauma for both perpetrators and victims. President Tshisekedi's praise for these youth as "patriots and heroes defending their lands and community interests"¹⁸ further normalizes youth participation in ethnic violence.

Long-term Implications

The active engagement of youth in hate speech propagation raises serious concerns about long-term regional stability. These patterns of youth mobilization, combined with digital amplification of hate speech, create self-perpetuating cycles of violence that threaten peaceful coexistence in the DRC. The sophistication of youth-led digital campaigns, coupled with physical violence, demands urgent intervention to prevent further escalation of ethnic tensions.

SYSTEMATIC TARGETING AND THE PERPETUATION OF VIOLENCE

Institutional Framework of Discrimination

The systematic targeting of Congolese Tutsis extends beyond isolated incidents such as electoral periods, revealing a coordinated pattern of discrimination embedded within institutional structures. This targeting occurs nationwide, with the ongoing conflict with the M23 rebellion serving as a pretext for violence against Tutsis, including accusations of using Congolese voter IDs to "infiltrate" the country (TV5MONDE 2022)¹⁹. Documentation demonstrates how institutional actors, from government officials to security forces, facilitate systematic discrimination.

¹⁷ MONUSCO. 2023. "Special Report on Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo." United Nations, December 2023.

¹⁸ <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2024/08/13/ticking-time-bomb-dr-congo-turns-abusive-militias-fight-m23-rebels>

¹⁹ TV5MONDE. 2022. "RDC/Rwanda: les réfugiés congolais au Rwanda s'inquiètent." Information Report.

President Tshisekedi's December 2024 address to Parliament accused the M23 of depopulating occupied areas to repopulate them with people from Rwanda, a claim rejected by Kigali (Deutsche Welle 2024a)²⁰. This exemplifies how official rhetoric justifies systematic persecution.

Military and Police Targeting

Military and police officers of Tutsi origin face particular targeting within security services. These officers face active discrimination from colleagues of other ethnic groups, local armed groups, Mai-Mai, Nyatura, as well as the FDLR. Their ethnic background and appearance result in labels such as "Rwandan infiltrators," "Rwandan spies," or "the eyes of Rwanda in the Congolese security apparatus."

The legitimization of this targeting comes from the highest levels of government. President Tshisekedi's November 2023 statement that "the Congolese security apparatus is weakened by the presence of Rwandan soldiers" and his March 2024 characterization of Rwandophone soldiers as "traitors" who must be removed exemplify official endorsement of discrimination.

Economic Warfare and Resource Destruction

The systematic nature of targeting includes deliberate economic devastation. The documented looting of over 700,000 cows represent a strategic attack on Congolese Tutsis' economic foundation and cultural heritage rooted in cattle rearing. This systematic destruction of livelihoods serves to undermine both the economic stability and cultural identity of targeted communities.

Forced Displacement and Property Destruction

Current statistics reveal more than 7,000 Congolese Tutsis forced into refugee camps in Rwanda. These displaced communities leave behind burned villages and destroyed lands, victims of systematic attacks by Wazalendo armed groups, including the FDLR, allegedly operating with state support. The destruction of property and infrastructure demonstrates coordinated efforts to prevent community return and reconstruction.

²⁰ Deutsche Welle. 2024a. "Kigali dément un 'repeuplement' dans l'est de la RDC." December 13, 2024.

Legal System Manipulation

The justice system itself becomes an instrument of persecution. Hundreds of Congolese Tutsis face arbitrary detention without fair trials, detained solely based on their ethnicity. The manipulation of legal processes to target specific ethnic groups reveals the deep institutional nature of discrimination.

State Legitimization of Violence

President Félix Tshisekedi's public praise for Wazalendo militias as "patriots and heroes defending their lands and community interests"²¹ demonstrates official endorsement of ethnic targeting. This rhetoric creates a permissive environment for violence, fostering impunity for crimes against Tutsi communities while deepening intercommunal divisions.

Religious and Community Institution Involvement

The systematic nature of targeting extends to religious and community institutions. Churches predominantly attended by Banyamulenge and Congolese Tutsis face organized attacks and demolition, often with security forces present and seemingly complicit. This targeting of religious spaces represents deliberate efforts to disrupt community gathering points and cultural institutions.

Media Role in Systematic Targeting

Media outlets contribute to systematic targeting through coordinated campaigns. Organizations like Bosolo na Politique, Tokomi Wapi, and RTNC consistently disseminate anti-Tutsi rhetoric, reviving and reinforcing narratives of ethnic conflict. The circulation of false information, such as misidentified images labeled as "Tutsi spies," demonstrates sophisticated manipulation of public opinion to justify targeting.

Geographic Concentration of Violence

The concentration of violence in specific regions—including Masisi, Rutshuru, Nyiragongo, Goma, Lubeo (North Kivu), and the high and middle plateaus of South Kivu—reveals

²¹<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2024/08/13/ticking-time-bomb-dr-congo-turns-abusive-militias-fight-m23-rebels>

strategic targeting of areas with significant Tutsi populations. This geographic pattern demonstrates coordinated efforts to affect specific communities and territories.

Documentation of Atrocities

The systematic nature of violence manifests in documented atrocities, including acts of lynching, burning and cannibalism against Congolese Tutsis. These acts, often filmed and shared by perpetrators, occur with impunity, indicating institutional tolerance for extreme violence against targeted communities.

Impact on Regional Stability

The perpetuation of systematic violence carries significant implications for regional stability. The radicalization of multiple sectors of society—including militias, law enforcement, and civilians—creates self-reinforcing cycles of violence that threaten peace throughout the Great Lakes Region. The legitimization of targeting specific ethnic groups undermines efforts at regional cooperation and conflict resolution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Legal and Institutional Reform

The Democratic Republic of Congo must strengthen its legal framework to effectively address hate speech and incitement to violence. Legislative reforms should align domestic laws with international human rights standards, particularly Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights²². Additionally, the justice system should establish specialized units focused on addressing cases of ethnic discrimination and incitement, supported by clear mechanisms for prosecuting hate speech offenses.

Digital Monitoring and Response

Investment in sophisticated digital monitoring tools remain crucial for tracking and responding to hate speech across social media platforms. Strategic partnerships with technology companies should prioritize the development of early warning systems capable of identifying

²² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights#:~:text=Article%2020.-1.&text=Any%20advocacy%20of%20national%2C%20racial,shall%20be%20prohibited%20by%20law.>

and addressing emerging patterns of hate speech before they escalate into violence. These monitoring systems must balance artificial intelligence capabilities with human oversight to ensure contextual accuracy and appropriate response measures.

Media Sector Reform

The Higher Council of Audiovisual and Communication (CSAC) requires substantial strengthening to regulate media content and enforce professional standards effectively. Media organizations should establish comprehensive editorial policies prohibiting hate speech and discriminatory content and robust enforcement mechanisms. Journalists must receive specialized training in ethical reporting on ethnic issues and conflict-sensitive journalism to avoid unintentionally promoting discriminatory narratives.

Security Sector Reform

A comprehensive reform of security forces must address deeply rooted institutional discrimination and prevent complicity in ethnic targeting. Security personnel should undergo mandatory training in human rights and ethnic sensitivity, supported by clear accountability mechanisms for officers involved in discriminatory practices. The reform must include specific protection measures for Tutsi officers within security forces and establish independent oversight of operations in areas with significant ethnic tensions.

Educational and Community Initiatives

The Ministry of Education shoulders responsibility for developing comprehensive programs addressing hate speech and promoting inclusive citizenship. School curricula must incorporate a nuanced understanding of DRC's ethnic diversity, the historical context of discrimination, and the importance of social cohesion. These educational efforts must extend beyond formal institutions to include community-based learning initiatives that foster inter-ethnic dialogue and understanding.

International Cooperation and Civil Society Support

Regional and international partnerships must strengthen to address the cross-border dimensions of hate speech and ethnic targeting.

These collaborative efforts should encompass information sharing, coordinated responses to cross-border incitement, and joint programs addressing refugee protection and return. Civil society organizations require enhanced support for their work in combating hate speech and promoting social cohesion, including funding for monitoring programs and protection mechanisms for activists.

Economic Recovery and Independent Monitoring

Economic development programs must specifically address systematic discrimination against marginalized communities, including compensation mechanisms for lost property and livestock, support for rebuilding destroyed infrastructure, and protection of traditional livelihoods. An independent national mechanism for monitoring and reporting hate speech incidents would enhance accountability through systematic documentation, early warning systems, and regular public reporting.

Political and Media Literacy

Political parties must develop and enforce strict standards prohibiting hate speech and ethnic discrimination in campaign rhetoric and party activities. Comprehensive media literacy programs should equip communities with tools to evaluate media content and resist manipulation through hate speech critically. These efforts should emphasize responsible social media use and build community resilience against inflammatory rhetoric.

Implementation and Oversight

Success in implementing these recommendations demands sustained commitment from all stakeholders and allocation of adequate resources. A multi-stakeholder oversight committee should monitor implementation progress, identify challenges, and propose solutions while maintaining pressure for reform. This comprehensive approach requires coordinated action across multiple sectors and consistent evaluation of progress toward defined objectives.

The effectiveness of these recommendations depend on their implementation as an integrated package rather than isolated measures. Each component reinforces the others, creating

a comprehensive framework for addressing hate speech and its consequences in the DRC. Regular assessment and adjustment of these measures will ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness in promoting social cohesion and preventing ethnic violence.

CONCLUSION

The systematic documentation of hate speech in the Democratic Republic of Congo reveals deeply concerning patterns that threaten not only the stability of the nation but the very fabric of its society. The evidence presented in this report demonstrates how hate speech has evolved from inflammatory rhetoric into a sophisticated tool of persecution, particularly targeting the Congolese Tutsi community.

The manifestation of hate speech across multiple domains - from political discourse to social media platforms, from religious institutions to security forces—indicates the pervasive nature of this challenge.

Political leaders, including President Tshisekedi has played significant roles in legitimizing discriminatory narratives. Their rhetoric has transformed into tangible actions, resulting in systematic violence, economic devastation, and forced displacement of targeted communities.

The documented cases reveal the human cost of unchecked hate speech. The looting of over 700,000 cattle represents not merely economic loss but the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage. The forced displacement of more than 7,000 Congolese Tutsis to refugee camps in Rwanda demonstrates how hate speech directly contributes to regional instability. Perhaps most disturbing are the documented cases of violence, including acts of lynching and cannibalism, that demonstrate the extreme consequences of dehumanizing rhetoric.

The role of technology in amplifying hate speech presents unprecedented challenges. Social media platforms have become powerful vectors for the rapid dissemination of inflammatory content, enabling coordinated campaigns of harassment and mobilization for violence. The digital landscape requires sophisticated monitoring and response mechanisms to address the speed and scale of online hate speech.

The exploitation of hate speech during electoral processes reveals how discrimination has become

institutionalized within democratic practices. The systematic denial of voter registration rights, coupled with organized violence against Tutsi communities during elections, undermines the fundamental principles of democratic participation and equal citizenship.

The involvement of youth in propagating hate speech raises particular concerns about the future of inter-ethnic relations in the DRC. The mobilization of young people through both traditional and digital networks suggests that without intervention, patterns of discrimination and violence may persist across generations.

State legitimization of armed groups under the “Wazalendo” label has created a dangerous precedent where ethnic targeting receives official sanction. This institutional support for discriminatory practices, combined with impunity for perpetrators of violence, creates conditions where hate speech can flourish unchecked.

The findings of this report demonstrate an urgent need for comprehensive intervention. The recommendations provided offer a framework for addressing hate speech through legal reform, institutional strengthening, educational initiatives, and international cooperation. However, their success depends on genuine commitment from all stakeholders and sustained pressure for implementation.

Addressing hate speech as the DRC approaches future political milestones becomes increasingly critical. The patterns documented in this report mirror dangerous historical precedents from the region, raising serious concerns about potential escalation. The international community must recognize these warning signs and act decisively to support efforts to combat hate speech and its devastating consequences.

The path forward requires acknowledgment that hate speech represents not merely an offensive language but a direct threat to human rights, democratic governance, and regional stability. Only through coordinated action, sustained commitment, and genuine political will can the DRC address this challenge and work toward building a society where all communities can live in peace and dignity.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: DOCUMENTED CASES OF TARGETING CONGOLESE MILITARY AND POLICE PERSONNEL (2021-2024)

Introduction

This annex documents the systematic targeting of Congolese military and police officers of Tutsi origin within the security and law enforcement services. These officers face discrimination from colleagues, local armed groups (Mai-Mai, Nyatura, Interahamwe), and FDLR forces due to their ethnic background. Labeled as "Rwandan infiltrators," "Rwandan spies," or "the eyes of Rwanda in the Congolese security apparatus," these individuals face persecution supported by inflammatory rhetoric from officials and media outlets.

The targeting intensified following President Tshisekedi's November 18, 2023, statement that "the Congolese security apparatus is weakened by the presence of Rwandan soldiers" and his March 30, 2024, characterization of "Rwandophone soldiers as traitors who must be removed" (Le Monde 2024). No official source has provided evidence of alleged Rwandan soldiers within FARDC, suggesting these accusations target Kinyarwanda-speaking soldiers native to eastern DRC.

DOCUMENTED CASES

Case 1: An unidentified FARDC soldier

- Date of the crime: March 4, 2024
- Location of the crime: Kinshasa
- Perpetrators: Youths
- Incident: An unidentified FARDC soldier was captured by youths in the streets of Ma Campagne, Kinshasa. They forced him to the ground, questioning his Tutsi ethnic origins and how he came to be in the Congolese army despite being Tutsi. No

investigation has been initiated, nor has there been any condemnation from the FARDC or Congolese authorities.

- Photo of the victim

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xpDIwwRCoCQMamWlUrDnkB9MamElrzDg/view>

Case 2: Captain Adrien GAHAYA

- Date of the crime: March 18, 2023
- Location of the crime Sake, North Kivu
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo of APCLS
- Incident: Captain FARDC Adrien was shot at close range by Wazalendo elements of the APCLS in Kimoka, near Sake, in the Masisi Territory.
- Photo of the victim

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lIcimQ4qmJpd3Y7tDGNawYahzEKSTaDu/view>

Case 3: Captain Alexis Bustro MUKESHA

- Date of the crime: March 18, 2023
- Location of the crime: Katindo, Goma
- Perpetrators: Colleagues
- Incident: On June 15, 2023, Captain (FARDC) Alexis was captured by his colleagues, who tortured him and injured his hand. He was treated at Katindo Military Hospital. No investigation has been initiated.
- Photo of the victim

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1i9M-22U6lbH8xJ9XeieCKo4ipqkoN8HD/view>

Case 4: Captain Egide MUGENZI

- Date of the crime: March 25, 2024
- Location of the crime: Kinshasa
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: Captain Egide MUGENZI was reported to be in critical condition in Makala Prison, Kinshasa, weeks after being transferred there by DEMIAP. He had spent over a year and several months in detention without trial, enduring torture, deprivation of food, and denial of access to medical care. Despite occasionally requesting medical attention, his requests were often denied.

- Photo of the victim

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hH5pMc6Brb1n4Yabj61Ww7nxfTkx0tj/view>

Case 5: Capt. Gabi BULAYA

- Date: August 18, 2022
- Location: Maitongi, Tshopo
- Perpetrators: His Colleagues
- Incident: Captain Gabi BULAYA of the PNC was shot at close range by his colleague in Maitonge, in the Ituri province. No trial has been initiated against the perpetrator.
- Photos: Photo of the victim

https://drive.google.com/file/d/14jf8hNNb4n2VSh6eXnrBkQ-VtAr_L2tS/view

Case 6: Captain Patrick Rukatura GISORE

- Date of the crime: November 9, 2023,
- Location of the crime: Goma, North Kivu
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: On November 9, 2023, Captain (FARDC) Patrick Rukatura GISORE, also known as KABONGO, was captured in Goma by Wazalendo elements in the presence of his colleagues. He was lynched, wrapped in tires, and set on fire. No investigation has been initiated.

- Photo of the victim

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kpYh2tgZhYewXPg1gq6XbXJ9ub6_DkK6/view

Case 7: Colonel Fizi MURUTA

- Date of the crime: March 12, 2023
- Location of the crime: Uvira, South Kivu
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: Colonel Fizi MURUTA was attacked at his home in Uvira by Wazalendo youths, who severely beat him and his family, causing a head injury. No investigation was initiated. According to the reports, the Colonel was arrested on December 11, 2023.

- Photo of the victim: Photo 1, Photo 2

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zWY-a2GVywbqxb8M29jli3cj05jJ6XhK/view>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/17b-hcdoYNyeRyd89dkMaDutD71HphCW-/view>

Case 8: Col Théo GAKURU

- Date of the crime: March 26, 2024
- Location of the crime: Kinshasa
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: Colonel FARDC Théo GAKURU was forcibly taken by Wazalendo elements of the FPIC Chini ya Kilima group in Bunia City, Ituri. They beat him to the point of near death, accusing him of being a “Rwandan infiltrator” and telling him to “return to Rwanda.” He is currently in a coma at the Bunia Military Hospital. No investigation has been initiated.
- Photo of the victim

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fGTX3n2HHhh16hRICPBXo8BHtc3a53Nv/view>

Case 9: Gitwaza MUTARO

- Date of the crime: January 21, 2023
- Location of the crime: Uvira, South Kivu
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: Corporal Gitwaza MUTARO of the PNC was captured by Wazalendo youths in Uvira, South Kivu. He was severely injured before the perpetrators fled. The individuals responsible for this act are known to be Wazalendo, but no investigation has been conducted to date.
- Photo of the victim

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/19t65ZWMW4864w356CpMyAoTGXDCHDWic/view>

Case 10: Lt. Bob NGIRIVUGIZI

- Date of the crime: March 18, 2023
- Location of the crime: Katindo, Goma
- Perpetrators: Colleagues
- Incident: On March 18, 2023, Lieutenant Bob was found dead in his house at the Katingo military camp in Goma, North Kivu. According to his relatives, he showed signs of having been hanged. No investigation has been initiated.
- Photo of the victim

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H1xitzVpJiFhg-RgPmrHvdyuKRylwEbK/view>

Case 11: Lt. Col BAGENI

- Date: July 17, 2022
- Location: Kisangani
- Perpetrators: Civilians and His FARDC Colleagues
- Incident: Lt Col BAGENI of the FARDC narrowly escaped a lynching in Kisangani. His colleagues came to his rescue by throwing him into the trunk of their vehicle, subjecting him to humiliation. The soldiers who were arrested for this act have already been released without any trial.
- Photos: [Photo of the victim]

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/11NTelSotFp9ykogUAF-oCn3fJvB74njo/view>

Case 12: Lt. Gapasi MUNYEMANZI

- Date: December 20, 2020
- Location: Munigi, Nyiragongo, North Kivu
- Perpetrators: Young Protesters
- Incident: Lieutenant Gapasi was violently seized and lynched by protesters in Buhene, Munigi, while colleagues present took no action to prevent the violence. No investigation followed.
- Photos: [Photo of the victim]

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1c3nUEXEJu7p3fOvvZ5KMaTVs8IN2c6GB/view>

Case 13: Lt. Kwizera BUTERA

- Date of the crime: January 31, 2023
- Location of the crime Baraka: Fizi, South Kivu
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Description of the crime: On January 31, 2023, Lieutenant Kwizera was captured by his colleagues in Baraka, in the Fizi territory. He was killed and buried in a mass grave. His body was found six days later in a state of decomposition. No investigation has been initiated.
- Photo of the victim

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JL4rGeh3faAodHWdhc4_OtpuKQa0S110/view

Case 14: Major Eric KIGABO

- Date of the crime: March 24, 2024,
- Location of the crime: Beni, North Kivu
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: Major Eric KIGABO (FARDC) was shot at close range by his escort in Beni, North Kivu Province. Before his death, he had been heavily threatened by Wazalendo groups and some of his colleagues, who accused him of being a "Rwandan," according to a family member.

- Photo of the victim: Photo 1, Photo 2

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/17OylfXzrRZacRcr0dWsip7eAHxJC8aiJ/view>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1CLLnXTJBIRDzHAxFuZLD2bn79GiLYg7V/view>

Case 15: Major Joseph KAMINZOBE

- Date: December 19, 2020
- Location: Lweba, Fizi, South Kivu
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: Major Joseph was lynched, burned, and subjected to cannibalism by Wazalendo youth in the presence of colleagues who failed to intervene. No investigation was initiated.
- Photos: [Photographic evidence referenced]

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Z1L1GC4WL8CdK5yeZ9Xci9SBI9_MGKvg/view

Case 16: Major Patrick NGABO

- Date of the crime: July 31, 2023
- Location of the crime: Goma and Kinshasa
- Perpetrators: Auditor
- Incident: Major (FARDC) Patrick died in a prison in Kinshasa after being denied medical care. He had been arrested in Goma, where he spent over three months, before being transferred to Kinshasa. Patrick had been unable to pay a large sum of money demanded by the auditor in Goma for his release. After more than a year in prison in Kinshasa without trial, he passed away. Patrick had been forced to pay a substantial amount for his release but could not meet the demand.

- Photo of the victim

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lpCQvowoAyuCGIJOAc33PrwkGb5NkZPJ/view>

Case 17: Major Police Sehogo Senga MASENGO

- Date of the crime: February 7, 2023,
- Location of the crime: Goma
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: On February 7, 2023, Major PNC Sehogo Senga MASENGO in Goma was targeted by a crowd of youths claiming to be Wazalendo and vigilante groups. He fled in his police jeep after being hit by stones near the Presidential Entrance (Himbi). No suspects have been arrested.

- Photo of the victim

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Kh675juebiUwnIqHCgurMGT0-OCydJi1/view>

Case 18: Maj Thomas SERUHANGA

- Date of the crime: March 26, 2024
- Location of the crime: Kinshasa
- Perpetrators: DEMIAP
- Incident: On March 31, 2024, Major Thomas SERUHANGA was arrested in Goma and transferred to Kinshasa, where he was detained at DEMIAP (intelligence service). He was denied access to medical care and subjected to torture (inhuman and degrading treatment). He died in the custody of DEMIAP on May 30, 2024. His arrest was due to his appearance and Congolese Tutsi ethnicity.
- Photo of the victim

https://drive.google.com/file/d/17aMAzNueBRx1zP5bTXgnlayK_4Nh4IY/view

Case 19: Moise MUNYENGABE

- Date of the crime: June 14, 2023
- Location of the crime: Sake, North Kivu
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: Moise was shot and injured by Wazalendo in Sake. His 15-year-old daughter, Nééma Munyagabe, along with his sister-in-law and wife, were killed. No investigation has been initiated.

- Photo of the victim
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OumEnErHPuAtFK3-ub1Ce9NOlhLuYEGI/view>

Case 20: Private Furaha GAPINGA

- Date of the crime: December 21, 2022
- Location of the crime: Kinshasa
- Perpetrators: Civilians
- Incident: Private Furaha GAPINGA was captured in the streets of Kinshasa by young members of the UDPS Force of Progress. He was severely beaten before being released. This happened in the presence of onlookers.
- Photo of the victim
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1maFC5wacFZaqkx03D53pxbOS_HlHJjbf/view

Case 21: Police Officer Bigege NKURUNZIZA

- Date of the crime: December 21, 2023,
- Location of the crime: Walungu, South Kivu
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: Police Officer Bigege NKURUNZIZA was attacked by Wazalendo youths in Walungu, South Kivu Province. He was beaten and sustained head injuries. This occurred in the presence of his colleagues, who did nothing to intervene. No investigation has been initiated.
- Photo of the victim
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yhQWF2gINaf6Z3hZc-QxtuE3gE8doKAt/view>

Case 22: Police Officer GASANABANI

- Date: September 25, 2023
- Location: Kalehe, South Kivu
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: The PNC Judicial Police Officer (OPJ), GASANABANI, was captured by a group of Nyatura in Lumbishi, Kalehe, South Kivu, who beat him before burning him alive. On the same day, FARDC soldier Habimana NDAYISABA was lynched by the Wazalendo in the middle of Kitshanga town in Masisi territory, North Kivu.

- Photos: [Photographic evidence referenced]
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gLeqA4pmXkv nT1HtBOPwb6XcllrYDEg/view>

Case 23: Police Officer Gilbert NDARUHUTSE

- Date of the crime: August 9, 2023
- Location of the crime: Kinshasa
- Perpetrators: Members of UDPS
- Incident: Police Officer Gilbert NDARUHUTSE narrowly escaped lynching by members of the UDPS Force of Progress and other radicalized youths in Kinshasa, who attempted to burn him alive. His colleagues intervened to save him. No investigation has been initiated.
- Photo of the victim
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bRmX79B8uFLd j0MyMDr3VEkLYITlIt5j/view>

Case 24: Police Officer Jean Luc Nsengiyumva SEBANDORE

- Date of the crime: March 17, 2024
- Location of the crime: Kinshasa
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: Police Officer Jean Luc Nsengiyumva SEBANDORE was captured in Goma by youths from vigilante groups and Wazalendo. He was severely beaten before being burned alive. No investigation has been initiated.
- Photo of the victim
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JY0ag-xPCVBB04P4SjTNVpX3GnjwOfiR/view>

Case 25: Police Officer KAZUNGU

- Date of the crime: February 20, 2024
- Location of the crime: Nyiragongo, North Kivu
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: Police Officer KAZUNGU (also known as KAMUZUNGU) was captured by Wazalendo youths in the village of Bugamba, Nyiragongo.

He was lynched and burned near the PNC office he was guarding. No investigation has been initiated.

- Photo of the victim

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KBAYMT07LJd2fIFzuSRX6jWPxnx24o84/view>

Case 26: Second Lt. Charles MUNYANEZA

- Date: September 18, 2022
- Location: Kamituga, South Kivu
- Perpetrators: FARDC Colleagues
- Incident: Second Lieutenant Charles of the FARDC was found hanged a few meters from his duty station in Kamituga, South Kivu. His colleagues are suspected of being the perpetrators of this heinous act. No investigation has been initiated.
- Photos: [Photographic evidence referenced]

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ovcQ3l3WzXt25ySAjqAXcdyqDTPla0aJ/view>

Case 27: Soldier GISORE

- Date of the crime: November 9, 2023
- Location of the crime: Bas-Congo
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: On November 11, 2023, FARDC soldier GISORE (a cousin of Rukatura GISORE) was forcibly removed from a vehicle by radicalized youths while traveling from Bas-Congo to Kinshasa. He was beaten to death with sticks. No investigation has been initiated.
- Photo of the victim

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/16HUNfMV-S2QoGErgRceXSvy7ZdXHRKU5/view>

ANNEX 2: LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE CONGOLESE TUTSI COMMUNITY LYNCHED, BURNED, AND CANNIBALIZED IN THE DRC (2021–2024)

Introduction

Since 2021, acts of cannibalism against members of the Congolese Tutsi community and/or the Banyamulenge have resurfaced in the DRC. These horrific acts have been met

with indifference by the global community, which has failed to intervene or pressure the Congolese government to uphold its internal and international obligations regarding the protection of ethnic minorities within its territory. These acts of cannibalism is accompanied by dehumanizing rhetoric targeting Congolese Tutsis.

Calls for hatred, dehumanization and violence against Congolese Tutsis are made with impunity and are often tolerated by the Congolese government. These practices of cannibalism are a direct consequence of this toxic discourse, which portrays this community as “Rwandan foreigners, enemies, illegal occupiers of land in Kivu... snakes,” according to statements by Congolese officials, civil society actors, journalists, and citizens movements (Lucha RDC, Filimbi, Veranda Mutshanga, etc.).

These hate-fueled pogroms are further fueled by xenophobic and anti-Tutsi campaigns, as evidenced by the promotion of the controversial book by Onana, Holocaust in Congo. This book, supported by the Congolese government even in academic settings, labels “Congolese Tutsis as the evil of Congo, the cause of its destruction, or as Rwandan foreigners in the DRC.”

Here, we present some of the devastating and cruel consequences of these acts of cannibalism, which starkly illuminate the plight of Congolese Tutsis in the DRC. The government has praised the perpetrators as “patriots” or “heroes,” leaving them unpunished, even as they film themselves committing these atrocities. These actions starkly contrast the UN’s “Never Again” slogan, a grim reminder of the failure to prevent genocide in the Great Lakes region 30 years after the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsis.

DOCUMENTED CASES

Case 1: Faustin NTAYOBERWA

- Date of the crime: June 18, 2022
- Location of the crime: Kalima
- Perpetrators: Local youth
- Incident: On June 18, 2022, Faustin NTAYOBERWA was seized by a crowd of local youth in Kalima, where he was lynched, burned, and cannibalized, with his flesh consumed alongside bread. The perpetrators filmed themselves tearing

apart and eating his flesh. However, none of them have faced any legal consequences from the Congolese justice system. Faustin was targeted solely because of his Tutsi ethnicity and physical appearance. Three other members of his community narrowly escaped the mob.

- Photo of the victim, 1, 2, 3, 4

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oAQfHA59AsHCXGXIDopgwdW2y-Qlj-NS/view>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WU4CdvAAmlxbrjpWjYD9Za5aiycRA7Fv/view>

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VZaoYrTUZlkJb4BtQ8_k444ncn1Cj1Dx/view

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ToSYCuTqzOaOOe3_iV4ulhpwHSe8luCu/view

Case 2: Major Joseph KAMINZOBE

- Date of the crime: On December 9, 2021
- Location of the crime: South Kivu province
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: On December 9, 2021, Major Joseph KAMINZOBE was captured, lynched, burned and cannibalized by young individuals identifying themselves as “Wazalendo” in the village of Lweba, Baraka, in Fizi territory, South Kivu province. The young men, claiming to be “Wazalendo,” dragged the FARDC officer out of the vehicle he was traveling in alongside other FARDC officers, none of whom intervened to save their colleague. The perpetrators filmed themselves committing these acts against the man they labeled a “Rwandan Tutsi.” Despite the overwhelming evidence, including the video footage, no judicial proceedings have been initiated.

- Photo of the victim: Photo 1, Photo 2

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dPLrFIWoS7TmwT3vQKYqXBFaUjcnLyi/view>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/14RvnbeSWXu7RK7ZS6otnuEm7GD-KAmYL/view>

Case 3: Michel KABERUKA

- Date of the crime: November 9, 2024
- Location of the crime: Mugunga
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: On November 9, 2024, Michel KABERUKA, a 32-year-old Congolese Tutsi from Ngungu, Masisi, was heading from Nzulo toward Mugunga, where a black market for second-hand goods was located. The Wazalendo captured him as he approached, taking his phone and money. They accused him of being a suspect sent to spy on their positions. When Michel attempted to deny their allegations, they then accused him of stealing their canister of local alcohol called “kargazoke.” The Wazalendo and other radicalized youths captured him, severely torturing, lynching, burning, and eating him. They shared the remains of his body and exposed it for sale to the public. The provincial government promised an investigation, but none has been carried out.

- Photo of the victim

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1rct12MqXfXtiSU2_N8Xm_xgL4Pv7UvEq/view

Case 4: Mr. Seruvumbu MANIRAKIZA

- Date of the crime: July 16, 2024
- Location of the crime: Misisi
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: On July 16, 2024, in Misisi, in the Fizi territory, a crowd of young Wazalendo members captured Seruvumbu MANIRAKIZA, a Congolese Tutsi from Kalehe. They lynched, burned, and ate him because he was a Tutsi. The group also stripped him of all his belongings, accusing him of being a “warugaruga,” a derogatory term used by anti-Tutsi extremists in the Kivu region to refer to Tutsis as “Rwandan foreigners in the DRC.” The administrator of the Fizi territory promised an investigation. Despite the perpetrators filming themselves while sharing Seruvumbu’s body, authorities have not prosecuted anyone for the crime.

The perpetrators are part of the Wazalendo groups, militias mobilized, reorganized and armed by the Congolese state.

- Photo of the victim

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GuRaVFJoVvO6ulfXP51aYnqnU-tqVcS3/view>

Case 5: NDAYISHIMIYE

- Date of the crime: May 30, 2024
- Location of the crime: Mugunga
- Perpetrators: Wazalendo
- Incident: On May 30, 2024, Ndayishimiye was in Ndosho to pick up his younger brother when young members of Wazalendo captured him in Mugunga. They lynched him, accusing him of filming the positions of the FARDC (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo). Journalists close to the government covering military operations in North Kivu propagated the story. However, none of them were able to show his phone or the images he supposedly filmed
- Photo of the victim

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NQ5jtd2fzDZ13vaXjVSwfBigsNbW9mP/view>

Case 6: Nsabimana SEBIGURI and Mushimire SEBIGURI

- Date of the crime: October 2022
- Location of the crime: Buhene
- Perpetrators: Mai-Mai
- Incident: In October 2022, young Mai-Mai fighters and others captured 25-year-old Nsabimina SEBIGURI and 28-year-old Mushimire SEBIGURI in Munigi at a location called Buhene.

The captors lynched, burned, and ate the men while drinking an alcohol called "bipande." Following a meeting with the military governor, Constant Ndima, the provincial government promised the Congolese Tutsi community an investigation into the murders. But to date, no progress has been made.

- Photo of the victim

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JuDYaJVYcMd1JVtUS7m1gbkwwx2AMEVZ/view>

Case 7: Renzaho HABIMANA

- Date of the crime: August 12, 2022
- Location of the crime: Mabanga Sud
- Perpetrators: Local vigilante groups
- Incident: On August 12, 2022, members of local vigilante groups captured Renzaho HABIMANA, who had gotten lost in the Mabanga Sud neighborhood. He was displaced from Rutshuru, fleeing the clashes. Renzaho's unfamiliarity with the area, inability to speak Kinyarwanda, and his appearance, which was allegedly associated with the "Tutsis," led to him being labeled as an "infiltrator to be killed and eaten." The perpetrators lynched, burned, and ate parts of Renzaho's body.

The Provincial Government promised an investigation, but no suspects have been arrested despite the identifiable faces of some perpetrators in the crime's video footage.

- Photo of the victim

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gz38aL_Zltv8jFYx8 IFgBM3SdXMcJR5/view



Scan for more information



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