

November 25, 2013

Paul Rusesabagina
315 Pleasant Knoll
San Antonio, TX 78260
E-mail:paulrusesabagina@yahoo.fr; info@pdrihumure.org

H.E. Mary Robinson,
U.N. Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region of Africa
United Nations, New York, NY USA

H.E. Martin Kobler,
U.N. Special Representative and Head of MONUSCO
United Nations, New York, NY USA

Hon. Russ Feingold,
U.S. Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region of Africa
Washington, DC USA

RE: PDR-IHUMURE URGES CAUTION AND WISDOM IN DEALING WITH FDLR

Your Excellencies:

1. I am coming before you as the President of the Party for Democracy in Rwanda (PDR-Ihumure), a political party that fights for truth, peace, justice and genuine reconciliation among Rwandans, and aims to return Rwanda from more than 2 decades of a permanent state of war and an implacable reign of terror to a time of appeasement and the rule of law.
2. On behalf of our membership inside and outside of Rwanda and the Rwandan refugee community across the globe, the leadership of the PDR-Ihumure has taken note of the recent developments regarding the defeat of M23 in eastern DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) by the FARDC (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo) with the assistance of the MONUSCO Force Intervention Brigade, and urges you to seize the opportunity offered by the removal of M23 to exercise maximum caution and wisdom in dealing with the FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda) issue in your quest for comprehensive peace in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, and in Rwanda in particular.
3. The issues underlying the crisis in eastern DRC and the entire Great Lakes Region are much more complex than the often-used pretext of the FDLR presence in DRC, which alone cannot account for over 2 decades of war crimes, crimes against humanity and even genocide by the Rwandan government army, including rapes of women and young girls, forced recruitment of child soldiers, the massive plunder of RDC mineral resources, and the killing of thousands of Rwandans and more than 7 million innocent Congolese, as fully documented by the U.N. Mapping Report, the Gersony Report, the U.N. Report of Experts on M23, and other reports.
4. In addition to being an armed group, the FDLR is also a Rwandan political party in exile among many others, and it has publicly stated its preference for direct negotiations with the Rwandan government over armed confrontation. Many of its members are said to be young men and women who were toddlers in 1994 or were born and raised in DRC over the last two decades. Therefore, FDLR members are bona fide refugees like all of us who have scattered in many parts of Africa, Europe and America, and who have mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins living in Rwanda or as exiled refugees across the globe. Yet, over the last several years, the FDLR has been collectively demonized by the Rwandan government as a group of genocidaires, and whipped up repeatedly as the poster child for

the entire Rwandan political opposition. Available estimates put the total number of Rwandan refugees in DRC alone at around 50,000, and labeling FDLR as genocidaires is tantamount to categorizing all these refugees as genocidaires. That's wrong.

5. Either in our party bylaws, at our Party Assessment Convention on December 15, 2012 in Brussels, or in our different publications and on many other occasions, we have unequivocally stated our opposition to any possible impunity for crimes of war, crimes against humanity, and the crime of genocide for anyone. If anyone within the FDLR is guilty of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, they must be prosecuted. Likewise, those guilty of the same crimes within the RPF government must equally be prosecuted.
6. A careful examination of both FDLR and M23 clearly suggests that these are two different groups in terms of origin, history, cause, nature and composition, and consequently the two groups should not be equated or handled in similar fashion. On one hand, there is FDLR, a group of Rwandan refugees who include women, children and the elderly, and who, like all of us refugees, demand to be granted their full rights to return to their motherland without being threatened, and to enjoy their basic freedoms as citizens of their country, Rwanda. In many ways, today's FDLR is an exact replica of the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front) rebel group that invaded Rwanda from Uganda in 1990, waged war with the Rwandan government over 4 years before taking power in July 1994. The only difference is that the RPF was a Tutsi rebel group, while the FDLR is a Hutu rebel group. On the other hand, there is M23, a mixed group of Congolese and Rwandan outlaws and criminals, run by warlords from within the upper echelons of the RDF (Rwanda Defense Forces) and fully funded logistically, militarily, and financially by Rwanda to occupy and exploit the resources of eastern DRC, as documented by the U.N. Group of Experts on DRC's Interim Report (S/2012/348) ([Addendum \(26 June 2012\)FINAL.pdf](#)). A majority of these M23 outlaws and criminals have been granted a safe haven by Rwanda almost a month after their defeat by the FARDC. That is why recent public statements by multiple U.N. officials that FDLR will be attacked, disarmed and dismantled like M23 appear misguided, because the two groups are simply not the same. A different approach would seem best indicated in dealing with the fundamental issues at the root of the FDLR rebellion, a primarily Hutu organization being targeted for elimination by a predominantly Tutsi minority military dictatorship in Rwanda. There is a real ethnic component to this issue that cannot be ignored or over-simplified.
7. As MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade, in collaboration with all countries and partner organizations involved, prepares to disarm and dismantle the FDLR in the broader context of the peace process in eastern DRC, the Great Lakes Region of Africa and in Rwanda in particular, we think it would be wise to look carefully at the contours of the evolving political realities inside Rwanda today. Since recently, there appears to be a growing radicalization of the RPF regime in Kigali against Hutus in a possible desperate effort to rally all Tutsi faithful around the regime and ward off a potential internal cracking of the ruling Tutsi coalition. In a speech at a Youth Konnect event June 30, 2013, President Kagame openly asked Hutu youths nationwide to apologize for all killings committed "in their name" by Hutus against Tutsis during the 1994 genocide, despite the fact that criminal responsibility is personal rather than collective. Similarly, following a recent two-day cabinet retreat on the theme "I am Rwandan" (Ndi Umunyarwanda) that ended Saturday November 8, 2013 in Kigali under the leadership of President Kagame, members of government made the resolution that "*The genocide against Tutsis was carried out in the name of Hutus, and so, for the sake of healing the Rwandan society, it's necessary for those in whose name genocide took place to apologize to those against whom it was carried out*", according to a press release issued by ORINFOR (Rwanda Information Office). Unfortunately, these do not appear to be edicts that can speed up reconciliation and encourage the average Hutu refugee to go back to Rwanda, let alone FDLR members whom the Rwandan government regularly accuses of "harboring the ideology of genocide" and of wanting to "finish the job of genocide". Rather, the general

fear is that there is a re-engineering of Rwandan society underway, with a very troubling unconfessed goal of creating a generation of second-class subservient citizens bound down by the eternal shame and guilt of genocide. All this is in addition to a well-documented situation of gross human rights violations that include persecution of political opponents whether real or perceived, arbitrary arrests and imprisonments, torture, disappearances, the stifling of the press, the hunting down of opponents in their countries of exile using death squads, etc. Clearly, this is not the kind of positive political vision that can heal scarred hearts and lead to a new united Rwanda.

8. Our PDR-Ihumure leadership - and the Rwandan political opposition in general - is fully aware of the possibilities of peace, justice, and democratic change ahead of us because of the Intervention Brigade. The idea of "direct" Peace Talks between the government of Rwanda and the Rwandan opposition (armed and non-armed), which was first proposed by Senator Russ Feingold in the summer of 2009 in a letter to then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and then echoed forcefully by Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete in May this year, before being endorsed by Belgian Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Didier Reynders, remains the best option in averting unnecessary bloodshed while putting an end to the Rwandan refugee problem and settling the Rwandan political crisis. This idea of peace talks has been called for many times by the FDLR and by the many political organizations in the opposition. It ought to be given utmost consideration.
9. Your Excellencies, because of its overwhelming success, we cannot tell you the immense admiration that the Force Intervention Brigade currently enjoys within not only Rwandan refugee communities across the globe but also within different communities from countries of the Great Lakes region of Africa. You should be very proud of the job you are doing. We hope MONUSCO/FIB will not mar this success or reverse its gains by making ill-advised decisions based on an incorrect reading of the exact causes of the conflict and the proper way to address them. We want to take a moment here to salute the bravery, self-less sacrifice and outstanding service of the Tanzania, South Africa, and Malawi contingents of the Intervention Brigade. We are particularly beholden to the 3 Tanzanian officers who paid the ultimate price so that peace, justice and the rule of law may reign in our region.
10. Should you need our expertise, please know that the PDR-Ihumure is more than ready to contribute our ideas and technical experts, and help define priorities in bringing to an end the long-running conflict of the Great Lakes Region of Africa in a way that guarantees the security of all ethnic groups while fostering peaceful coexistence and economic prosperity.

Sincerely,

Paul Rusesabagina (Signed)
President,
PDR-Ihumure

CC:

- H.E. Ban Ki-moon
Secretary General, United Nations
New York, New York

- H.E. Jacob Zuma
President of the Republic of South Africa
Pretoria, South Africa

- H.E. Jakaya Kikwete
President of the Republic of Tanzania
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
- H.E. Joyce Banda
President of the Republic of Malawi
Lilongwe, Malawi
- H.E. Joseph Kabila
President of the Democratic Republic of Congo
Kinshasa, DRC
- H.E. Dr. Nkosozana Dlamini Zuma
Chairperson, African Union Commission
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- H.E. Manuel Barroso
President, European Commission
Brussels, Belgium
- Hon. John Kerry
Secretary of State, USA
Washington, DC
- Hon. Didier Reynders
Deputy PM and Foreign Minister, Belgium
Brussels, Belgium
- Hon. William Hague
Foreign Secretary, UK
London, UK
- Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax
Executive Secretary, SADC
Gaborone, Botswana
- Prof. Ntumba Luaba
Executive Secretary, ICGLR
Bujumbura, Burundi