

Humanitarian crisis in the Eastern Democratic of the Congo

Suggested by IFORAP organisation Perth - 13/03/2023

1. CONDEMNATION of Rwanda and its Rwandan Defence Forces

We urge, the undersigned members of the parliament and the Australian government, to strongly condemn Rwanda and its Rwandan Defence Forces for their involvement in the support of M23 rebels in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Recent investigations by the United Nations Group of Experts on Congo, as well as Human Rights Watch research, provide significant photographic and other evidence that Rwanda is not only giving logistical support to the M23, but that Rwandan troops are reinforcing or fighting alongside the armed group inside Congo.

This presence and support is a clear violation of DRC's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It undermines efforts to bring stability and security to the region, exacerbating the ongoing humanitarian crisis and leading to the displacement of thousands of innocent civilians.

Furthermore, this support for M23 rebels threatens the peace and security of the Great Lakes region and hinders the progress towards achieving the objectives of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the region.

We call upon the Government of Rwanda to immediately cease all support to M23 rebels, withdraw its troops from DRC territory and respect the sovereignty of the DRC. We also urge the Australian Government to take strong and decisive action to condemn this blatant violation of international law and support efforts towards achieving peace and stability in the region.

We believe that as an important member of the international community, it is our duty to speak out against such violations and promote respect for international law and human rights.

We therefore call upon the parliament house to pass this motion in condemnation of the Rwandan Defence Forces'/government presence in Eastern DRC in support of M23 rebels.

2. REPORT on the Humanitarian Crisis in Eastern DRC

Introduction

The renewed hostilities by the M23, the Congolese army, and various other armed groups have resulted in a humanitarian crisis in North Kivu and the broader eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The situation has forced more than 520,000 people to flee their homes, according to the United Nations, exacerbating an already catastrophic security and humanitarian situation.

Displacement and Humanitarian Needs

The hostilities have resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, who are now living in squalid and overcrowded camps outside Goma. The camps lack basic amenities, and people are living in unhygienic conditions, increasing the risk of the spread of communicable diseases. According to Médecins Sans Frontières, there is a potential health disaster as cholera spreads rapidly in the camps. There is an urgent need for clean water, sanitation facilities, and medical supplies to prevent the spread of disease.

Food Insecurity

The conflict has disrupted agricultural activities, resulting in food shortages and insecurity. Farmers have been forced to flee their fields, and their crops have been destroyed, leading to a significant reduction in food production. The World Food Programme estimates that more than 13 million people are facing food insecurity in the DRC, with the situation likely to deteriorate further as the conflict continues.

Child Protection

Children are among the most vulnerable groups in the camps. They are at risk of exploitation, abuse, and recruitment into armed groups. UNICEF reports that armed groups in the DRC have recruited more than 1,500 children, since the beginning of the conflict. There is an urgent need for child protection services to prevent the recruitment of children into armed groups and to provide support and assistance to children who have been affected by the conflict.

Conclusion

The humanitarian crisis in eastern DRC is a result of the ongoing conflict between the M23 backed by Rwanda, the Congolese army, and various other armed groups. The crisis has resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, food insecurity, and a potential health disaster. There is an urgent need for humanitarian assistance to provide basic needs such as food, water, sanitation, and medical supplies, and to protect vulnerable groups, particularly children. The international community must act urgently to support the humanitarian response and to help find a lasting solution to the conflict in the region.

3. REPORT on Rwanda's Military Support for M23

Introduction

Rwanda's continued military support for the M23 rebel group in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been a matter of concern for the international community. Human Rights Watch has warned that Rwanda's support for M23 could implicate it in M23 abuses as a matter of state responsibility and that Rwandan officials could be found complicit in M23 war crimes. This report explores the implications of Rwanda's military support for M23 and the role of the Commonwealth and its member countries in addressing this issue.

Rwanda's Military Support for M23

Rwanda has been accused of providing logistical support and even direct military involvement in M23's activities in the DRC. This support has enabled the rebel group to continue its campaign of violence and human rights abuses against civilians in the region. Human Rights Watch has documented several cases of war crimes committed by M23, including rape, killings, and forced recruitment of children.

Implications for Rwanda

Rwanda's support for M23 could implicate it in the group's abuses as a matter of state responsibility. Under international law, states are responsible for the actions of their agents and officials. If Rwandan officials are found to be complicit in M23 war crimes, they could be held accountable for their actions. This could lead to diplomatic and legal repercussions for Rwanda, including possible sanctions and loss of international aid.

4. ROLE of the Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is an association of 54 member countries, most of which are former British colonies. The organization promotes democracy, human rights, and the rule of law among its members. The Commonwealth has a role to play in addressing Rwanda's military support for M23 and the implications of this support for international human rights and the rule of law.

The Commonwealth and its member countries should make clear to Rwanda, both publicly and privately, that its support for M23 is unacceptable and could lead to diplomatic and legal repercussions. The Commonwealth should also support efforts to investigate and prosecute those responsible for war crimes and other human rights abuses committed by M23 and its supporters.

Conclusion

Rwanda's military support for M23 is a matter of concern for the international community, and there are implications for the country's international reputation and standing. The Commonwealth and its member countries have a role to play in addressing this issue and promoting respect for human rights and the rule of law. By making clear to Rwanda the potential consequences of its actions, the

Commonwealth can help to deter further support for M23 and promote accountability for war crimes and other human rights abuses committed in the region.

On December 15, United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that Rwanda should “use its influence with M23 to encourage” them to withdraw and to “pull back” its own forces. Belgium, France, Germany, and the European Union have also urged Rwanda to stop assisting the M23.

5. SOLUTIONS to the humanitarian crisis

Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been experiencing armed conflict for decades. The recent conflict between the DRC government and M23 rebels backed by the Rwandan government has displaced thousands of people in the eastern part of the country. This report aims to examine the situation of refugees in eastern Congo and suggests a solution.

The refugees have faced numerous challenges, including lack of access to basic needs such as food, water, and shelter. They have also been exposed to violence, disease, and exploitation. Women and children are particularly vulnerable and have been subject to sexual violence and forced labour.

Solution

The solution to the refugee crisis in Congo is to have all refugees return to their native lands and help them to rebuild their communities/villages. This will involve providing them with the necessary resources to rebuild their homes, schools, hospitals, and farming activities. The government of Congo, in collaboration with international organizations, should undertake the following actions:

- **Security:** The government should ensure that the security situation in the areas of return is stable and conducive to resettlement. This will involve disarming militia groups and ensuring that the rule of law is upheld.
- **Reconstruction:** The government and international organizations should support the reconstruction of homes, schools, hospitals, and farming activities in the areas of return. This will involve providing building materials, equipment, and expertise to the returning refugees.
- **Education:** The government and international organizations should prioritize the construction of schools in the areas of return to ensure that children have access to education. This will involve the recruitment of teachers and provision of teaching materials.
- **Healthcare:** The government and international organizations should support the construction of healthcare facilities in the areas of return. This will involve the recruitment of healthcare workers and provision of medical supplies.
- **Livelihoods:** The government and international organizations should support the re-establishment of farming activities in the areas of return. This will involve providing seeds, tools, and training to returning refugees.

Conclusion

The conflict has the potential to cause catastrophic environmental damage, as the affected area includes a national park that is protected by UNESCO. The displacement of people, coupled with the destruction of the environment, could have a devastating impact on the region's biodiversity, ecosystem, and the livelihoods of local communities that depend on it. It is crucial for all parties involved in the conflict to prioritize the protection of the environment and ensure that the national park is not further damaged during the conflict.

The displacement of millions of people, including refugees, as a result of conflict is a humanitarian crisis that requires urgent attention. In order to provide a sustainable solution, it is essential to facilitate the safe return of all refugees to their native lands and support them in rebuilding their communities and villages. This effort will require collaboration between the government of Congo and international organizations to ensure security, reconstruction, education, healthcare, and livelihoods for returning refugees.

Rebuilding communities and villages will entail constructing schools, hospitals, and other vital infrastructure. The provision of farming activities and job opportunities will be essential to enable refugees to earn a livelihood and provide for their families. Collaboration between international organizations and local authorities will be critical in ensuring that these efforts are sustained over the long term.

It is the responsibility of all stakeholders to work towards a peaceful and stable Congo, where all individuals have access to their basic needs and can thrive. By ensuring the safe return and successful reintegration of refugees, we can begin to address the humanitarian crisis and work towards lasting peace and stability in the region.