



21 November 2008

Dear Prime Minister,

As you are very aware, a humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding before our eyes in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We welcome the UK Government's high-level engagement on this over recent weeks.

We believe that the ceasefire exists now in name only and cannot be seen as a credible guarantee of security or stabilisation. There are ongoing battles between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) and a number of rebel groups. Reports from the ground indicate that the situation is continuing to deteriorate, with attacks on civilians occurring every day. Human rights organisations have documented the killings of at least 50 people in the town of Kiwanja, and it is likely there have been many more civilian deaths. Around 250,000 people have been displaced since August and humanitarian access to vulnerable populations is severely limited.

We commend the UK Government for its efforts in supporting the political process to help bring an end to the conflict. However, these efforts, while vital, are not sufficient to protect civilians at risk. We welcome recent progress in discussions in New York on reinforcements to the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), but believe that MONUC is currently

overstretched and often unable to fulfil its Chapter VII mandate to provide immediate protection for civilians. Any MONUC reinforcements – while necessary – are likely to take several months to deploy.

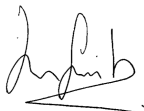
In our view the most effective way to prevent more killings in DRC, before MONUC can be reinforced, is for the Europeans to agree to a rapid, short-term deployment of troops with a clear mandate to protect civilians. Such a force could immediately contribute to improving overall security in the area, and thereby improve access for humanitarian organisations and free MONUC to fulfil its mandate in other areas. Most importantly it could save the lives of thousands.

You have shown significant leadership in the past by talking about the role that Britain should play in the world and the necessity to live up to our responsibility to protect civilians. This is a critical opportunity for you and the UK Government to show leadership in Europe, working with others to fulfil that pledge and act to prevent more killings.

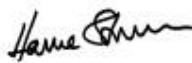
Waiting for this crisis to escalate further would be disastrous.

We call on you to show the necessary international leadership to ensure a rapid, short-term EU deployment, and for the UK to play whatever part is necessary to deliver that force, to fulfil the UK Government's promise to protect civilians.

Yours sincerely,



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