



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable
Edward R. Royce, Chairman
House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of August 2 regarding the violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The DRC government's continued delays in organizing elections and President Kabila's decision to remain in power beyond his mandate have exacerbated the political impasse and tensions within the DRC. We share your concerns about the increased unrest, insecurity, and human rights abuses and violations in the country. The recent violence in eastern DRC and specifically the Kasai regions can be attributed to a number of complex factors, including the DRC government's lack of state authority and its support for a proxy militia. Additionally, armed groups are exploiting a void in state authority and the increasingly politicized and tense environment.

The United States is actively pushing both the DRC government and the opposition to make greater progress on the implementation of the December 31 Saint Sylvestre agreement, and for the government to take concrete steps towards electoral planning, including completing the voter registration process and applying pressure on the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) to announce an electoral calendar. We continue to coordinate our actions toward this end with the region, including the African Union, sub-regional organizations, and key regional leaders; the European Union (EU) and our European partners; and the UN, including at the Security Council and through the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC, MONUSCO, thus increasing the impact of our efforts. The United States recognizes the essential role the peacekeeping mission plays in the country, and we remain committed to ensuring that MONUSCO is responsive, flexible, and able to fulfill its mandate.

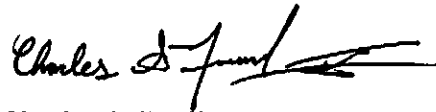
We have also called on the DRC government both publicly and privately to protect political space for civil society, to allow the political opposition to operate without harassment, and to cease violence by the security forces, including arbitrary and unlawful arrests and detentions. We successfully encouraged the Human Rights Council (HRC) to adopt a resolution on the situation in the Kasai at its June 2017 session, and have urged the DRC government to cooperate with the resulting international investigation scheduled to begin in the coming weeks. We have subsequently urged countries to oppose the DRC's candidacy for a seat on the HRC for the 2018-2020 term and will continue to oppose its candidacy, based on the principle that serious human rights violators ought not be given the privilege and responsibility of monitoring and addressing global human rights practices.

Since June 2016, we have imposed targeted sanctions on six current or former DRC government officials and one entity responsible for undermining democratic processes or institutions in the DRC. To the extent possible, we have worked to synchronize our sanctions actions with those of the EU. We remain prepared to impose additional targeted sanctions as political and security developments warrant.

Ambassador Dennis Hankins, Chargé d'Affaires, currently is leading the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa and our efforts in country. We stand ready to work with the next U.S. ambassador whenever he or she is nominated and confirmed.

We hope this information is helpful in addressing your concerns. Please feel free to contact us further on this or any matter of concern to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles S. Faulkner", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Charles S. Faulkner
Bureau of Legislative Affairs



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Incoming

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