

February 20, 2025

DRC

Call to end Rwanda-backed M23/AFC crimes and withdrawal from the Democratic Republic of Congo

The alarming violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) continues following the recent invasion and occupation of Goma and Bukavu in eastern DRC by the [Rwanda-backed M23/AFC rebel group](#), from January 27 and February 14, 2025, respectively, to the present. Reports from human rights organizations and the United Nations indicate that over [3,000 civilians](#) were killed in Goma during these attacks. Indigenous Peoples and their rights defenders have been specifically targeted in these killings, and [thousands of families have been displaced](#), further exacerbating an already [catastrophic humanitarian crisis](#) in the region.

The massacres and forced displacement of Indigenous Peoples by the Rwanda-backed M23 rebels in eastern Congo are deliberate strategies to occupy their lands and territories for the illegal extraction of [strategic minerals](#), including cassiterite, gold, coltan, and tungsten. These activities have led to widespread atrocities including the use of children in mining operations and the systematic sexual violence against Indigenous women in North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri provinces. Additionally, threats of further violent attacks continue to be expressed by countries supporting these atrocities. Civilians, including Indigenous Peoples and their rights defenders, remain the primary victims of this conflict, yet they are not receiving the necessary humanitarian aid, security protection, and access to justice.

As a global Indigenous Peoples organization committed to protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the [Indigenous Peoples Rights International \(IPRI\)](#) and its partner organizations strongly condemn the ongoing violence in eastern Congo, particularly the targeted attacks on Indigenous Peoples communities and their defenders.

We urgently call on the **Human Rights Council, the UN Security Council, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the European Union, and other relevant bodies and organizations** to:

- **End impunity** by ensuring that the perpetrators of these atrocities are held accountable and that justice is served for all civilian victims, including Indigenous Peoples.
- **Demand that the Rwandan government immediately cease all support to the M23/AFC rebels** and ensure the withdrawal of its troops from the DRC.
- **Suspend financial and military aid to Rwanda**, as it is fueling violence in eastern Congo and facilitating the illegal and unjust extraction and trade of minerals.
- **Suspend and review the [memorandum of understanding \(MoU\)](#) between the European Union (EU) and Rwanda** on the supply of critical minerals, ensuring that minerals exported by Rwanda are not illegally extracted from eastern Congo at the cost of displacement, killings, and attacks against Indigenous Peoples. Such violations contravene the UN Charter, international humanitarian law, and the [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#).
- **Provide urgent humanitarian aid and security measures** for all civilian victims, including Indigenous women and children, prevent further attacks and abuses, and ensure their immediate and long-term protection.

IPRI and its partners stand in solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples and communities in eastern DRC and urge the international community to take immediate and decisive action to end the ongoing violence.