



REFLECTION ON THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

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Reflecting on the current situation of the DRC, I am pained, challenged and also full of hope of a DRC that will emerge more peaceful, just and whose people's blood that have been shed and that covers the 'diamonds' of the land will not be in vain. Through this, as the mustard seed that Jesus speaks about will sprout and grow into a mighty tree where birds will come and settle on. Like Martin Luther King, I have a dream of a DRC where weapons will no longer be a choice to resolve conflicts but the people will go back to their African wisdom and sit down often under a tree to dialogue, to call their people to harmony, to community (ubuntu), forgiveness and reconciliation. Where the wisdom of the old will inform the children and youth through mentorship. I am grateful that today, we are here to dialogue using peaceful means, we are here to share ideas on how best we can restore our beautiful home, the DRC and all its people. The current reality of our situation in the DRC where just a few days ago during the 64th anniversary of the Independence of the DRC from Belgian Colony saw the capture by the M23 rebels supported by the RDF capture the South of Lubero (Kanyabayonga, Kayna, Kirumba and other neighbouring villages) and their progression towards the capital of this same Lubero territory leading to displacement and confusion and intimidation among the population. Equally, the massacre of more than thirty finalist students at the State Examination Centre in Ufamandu 1st in Masisi territory on the last day of these exams. As we reflect on these painful realities in the DRC, let us lay a foundation for these discussions. Please, I invite you to come with me

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- I invite us as we engage in these discussions, to listen to the cries of the DRC mothers that bring forth life and breast feed children some who have to die before they can celebrate their 5th birthday; whose lives are violated and destroyed when rape is widely used as a weapon of war.
- I invite us to listen and watch mothers and fathers whose sons and daughters' potential and dreams for a new DRC are cut short, others forced to engage in militia activities and go against the values and norms they have invested in of respect for all life, respect for elders, harmony, community living, care, sharing with all especially the poor.
- I invite us to listen and watch the children cry for lack of care, food, medical attention, denial of warmth and security; their only voices of wonder are the gunshots and bullets and the games left is running to flee with their parents to an unknown destination.
- I invite us to listen and watch the environment, our common home, a land of beauty, the rainforest, endowed with minerals, with the gorillas and other creatures – destroyed through extractive industries, succumbing to the greed especially of the international communities, the earth that is now soaked with the blood of the innocent.
- It is in this space that I invite us today to discuss and share on this our beloved country, the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- When will the guns be silenced? When will these useless violent wars cease so that the people of the DRC enjoy their inalienable right to life, freedom, justice and peace?
- When will we learn from experience that 'violence only begets violence'?
- When will we give a chance to the new ways of addressing the crisis in DRC that some of the youth in DRC and other Africa countries such as my own, Kenya, have embraced – the way of active nonviolence as the way to peace; a way of being and doing?
- When will the local and international institutions such as the African Union, United Nations, European Union, the Church, the Civil Society join hands to liberate the DRC and other African countries entrapped and paralysed by these intractable violent conflicts – wars that are being fought piecemeal as Pope Francis notes.
- As we discuss sustainable peace in the DRC; local and regional strategies in response to the challenges, the DRC complex security crisis, let us have these in mind.

Thank you! Peace! Shalom!