

Resolution on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and rape as a war crime

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Following the debate in plenary, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and rape as a war crime and strongly condemns the use of rape as a weapon of war, recalling that the International Criminal Court has jurisdiction over such acts, as does the DRC. It points out that the war in the eastern part of the DRC has resulted in sexual violence against women on a widespread and alarming scale, committed by armed rebel groups as well as by government, army and police forces. According to the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, the sexual violence in the DRC is the worst in the world. According to the DRC Humanitarian Action Plan 2008, 32 353 rapes were reported during 2007, which was most probably a fraction of the total number.

Parliament urges in particular that the perpetrators of sexual violence against women be reported, identified, prosecuted and punished, in accordance with national and international criminal law. It calls on the Government of the DRC to put an end to impunity and to implement the new law adopted by its Parliament outlawing sexual violence, which lays down stiffer penalties for perpetrators. It urges the international community to take all necessary steps to support the relevant national authorities in investigating these acts and prosecuting those responsible. The EU is called upon to allocate substantial funds to providing medical, legal and social support for victims of sexual abuse and empowering women and girls as a way of preventing further sexual abuse.

All the forces participating in conflicts in the east of the DRC must respect human rights and international humanitarian law (IHR), cease all attacks on women and other civilians and allow humanitarian agencies to come to the assistance of victims. Parliament calls on the EU and the UN formally to recognise rape, forced impregnation, sexual slavery and any other forms of sexual violence as crimes against humanity, serious war crimes and a form of torture, whether or not they are carried out in a systematic manner. All UN member states that send personnel on the MONUC peacekeeping mission are asked to follow up claims of sexual abuse, particularly those which concern minors, and bring individuals who have committed sexual abuse to court as quickly as possible. MONUC's mandate with respect to the protection of civilians against sexual violence must be strengthened.

Parliament expresses its deep concern at the fact that sexual violence is causing an immense rural exodus, and stresses that systematic sexual violence and an overall "culture of sexual violence" destroy all social networks and represent a genuine national threat.

Lastly, it calls on the Commission to provide support, including financial aid, for the holding of a peace conference in Kivu with a view to enabling the population to participate in the search for lasting solutions.