Resolution on the targeted attacks against Christians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: defending religious freedom and security

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the targeted attacks against Christians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: defending religious freedom and security.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ECR, Renew, Greens/EFA groups.

The eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has endured decades of widespread violence and instability. The situation continues to deteriorate significantly, with persistent human rights violations by armed groups, mass displacement, attacks on civilians and alarming humanitarian conditions further exacerbated by armed conflicts, such as the conflict between the DRC Government, the Rwanda-backed armed rebel group March 23 Movement (M23) and other militias, which has already resulted in the forceful internal displacement of 4.6 million people in the eastern DRC. Around 100 separate armed groups are estimated to be operating in the eastern DRC.

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) is one of the most prominent extremist groups with explicitly religious objectives. It has a long history of committing terrorist attacks in the eastern DRC, particularly in North Kivu and Ituri provinces. North Kivu is a resource-rich region, with vast supplies of critical raw materials including cobalt, gold and tin, which are necessary for the global digital and energy transitions. The Congolese Catholic Church claims that the ADF is responsible for the deaths of around 6 000 civilians in Beni between 2013 and 2021 and more than 2 000 in Bunia in 2020 alone. In 2024, many Christians were killed in the DRC by jihadists.

The EU has repeatedly affirmed its commitment to the promotion and protection of religious freedom globally and has taken steps to combat religious persecution and intolerance in various parts of the world. Christians are the largest persecuted religious group in the world. Moreover, Parliament has consistently called for the strengthening of international efforts to combat religious persecution and to hold accountable those responsible for attacks on minority communities.

Parliament strongly condemned the occupation of Goma and other territories in the eastern DRC by M23 and the RDF as an unacceptable breach of the DRC’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. It urged the Rwandan Government to withdraw its troops from DRC territory, the presence of whom is a clear violation of international law and the UN Charter, and cease cooperation with the M23 rebels. It also demanded that Rwanda and all other potential state actors in the region cease their support for M23.

Parliament called for the **immediate cessation** of all forms of violence and for the commitment of all parties involved in the ongoing conflict in the eastern DRC to respect international humanitarian law.

Members strongly condemned the targeted terrorist attacks carried out by the ADF against Christian communities in the eastern DRC, including killings, abductions and the destruction of religious property, and called for an immediate halt to such acts of violence. They also condemned the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group and the ADF, as well as other rebel groups, and their egregious human rights abuses that amount to crimes against humanity.

Parliament supports the international efforts against the ADF and encourages the EU Member States to consider ways of contributing to these efforts, including increased efforts to **trace and interdict ISIS secret funds** held overseas and to trace any raw materials stemming from their illegal exploitation by the ADF. The EU is called on to support the necessary capacity-building and expertise to combat ADF ideology and rhetoric, particularly within the Muslim communities of both Uganda and the DRC, to prevent recruitment among those communities. It requests the application of the EU global human rights sanctions regime to those responsible for planning, ordering or participating in the killing of Christians in the DRC.

The resolution also called:

- for an immediate and effective **ceasefire**, and for the full implementation of diplomatic agreements, including the Luanda and Nairobi peace processes;

underlines the urgent need for the stabilisation of the country;

- on M23 to **halt its territorial advances and withdraw** from the territory of the DRC;

- on the UN to ensure the protection of civilians and respect for international humanitarian law;

- on the international community to increase support for services in the eastern DRC so that civilians who have been targeted can have access to legal services and psychological support;

- on the DRC Government to counter extremist propaganda and to establish **early warning mechanisms** to more effectively prevent and respond to attacks by the ADF and other armed groups against civilians;

- on all parties to allow and **facilitate humanitarian access** to address the urgent need for essential services in the eastern DRC and neighbouring countries, notably Burundi;

Lastly, Parliament noted, with concern, the growing influence of the Russian Orthodox Church in Africa, which is a staunch supporter of the Putin regime and its violent, unlawful war in Ukraine. It underlined that this development raises significant questions regarding the broader geopolitical and ideological objectives of the Russian Federation in Africa.