

ALERT:

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC of the CONGO



The Museum has placed the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) on its “Warning” list, identifying it as a situation in which organized violence is occurring. The Museum’s concern about this situation stems from the:

- **RELATIONSHIP** it bears to the **1994 RWANDAN GENOCIDE**
- Scale and effects of **VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIANS**
- Massive number of **SEXUAL ASSAULTS** on women
- **CONTINUED FIGHTING** in the east
- **ROLE OF ETHNICITY** in the perpetration of violence

DRC, formerly known as Zaire, has suffered two wars since 1996. The first war began as a direct result of the 1994 genocide in neighboring Rwanda. The second began in 1998 and involved the armed forces of at least seven countries and multiple militias. According to a 2008 International Rescue Committee report, an estimated 5.4 million people have died as a result of this war—most from preventable diseases that have spread due to the collapse of infrastructure, lack of food security, displacement, and destroyed health-care systems.

In 2006, DRC held its first multi-party elections in more than 40 years; more than 25 million citizens participated. However, national and provincial structures remain incapable of ensuring basic security for communities.

In the east, the war that began in 1998 never conclusively ended. Today, a range of armed forces continue to engage in combat and prey upon the civilian population, forcibly displacing them, abducting them, looting their possessions, recruiting their children as soldiers, and committing massive numbers of sexual assaults on women. According to the United Nations, 27,000 sexual assaults were officially reported in 2006 in eastern Congo’s South Kivu Province alone; thousands more go unreported in the east due to the stigma associated with gender-based violence and the victims’ lack of access to medical and legal authorities. Ethnic hostility has been fueled by inter-group violence in DRC over the past ten years and by the impact of the genocide and continuing violence in neighboring Rwanda and Burundi. This has produced an environment in which groups—fearing their entire existence is under threat—engage in pre-emptive attacks.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum honors the memory of those who suffered in the Holocaust by alerting the national conscience, influencing policymakers, and stimulating worldwide action to prevent and confront genocide and related crimes against humanity. Join our efforts at ushmm.org/conscience.

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WHAT CAN I DO?

HELP THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM CONFRONT GENOCIDE AND RELATED CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY TODAY

- 1. JOIN OUR COMMUNITY OF CONSCIENCE.** Visit our Web site, ushmm.org/conscience, and sign up for our *Genocide Prevention e-Newsletter*, subscribe to the *Voices on Genocide Prevention* podcast, and find out more about places at risk of genocide or related crimes against humanity.
- 2. CONTACT THE MEDIA.** Tell them you want better coverage of places at risk of genocide or related crimes against humanity. Visit their Web sites, call them, and e-mail them feedback on their efforts.
- 3. COMMUNICATE WITH DECISION MAKERS** in government and in international and regional organizations about the need to provide humanitarian assistance, protect civilians, stop the violence, and promote solutions to the crises.
- 4. GET ENGAGED IN YOUR COMMUNITY.** Help spread the word—talk about what you’ve learned with your friends, family, members of organizations you belong to, and coworkers. Schools, churches, synagogues, mosques, and other groups across the country are making a difference, and yours can too.
- 5. SUPPORT EDUCATION AND RELIEF EFFORTS.** Support the Museum’s ongoing efforts to draw attention to places at risk of genocide or related crimes against humanity. Find out more about organizations working on the ground and how you can help.

YOUR VOICE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Learn how at ushmm.org/conscience.

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