

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 3, 2008

The Honorable Joseph Kabila
President, Democratic Republic of Congo
c/o Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Congo
1726 M Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear President Kabila,

We write to you to express our deep concern at the violence that has escalated in North Kivu Province over the past weeks. According to many observers, an estimated 200,000 additional people have been displaced from their homes since late August by some of the worst fighting that eastern Congo has seen since 2004.

We know that the responsibility for this renewed violence is shared by many parties, but we urge you in the strongest terms possible to establish a ceasefire with General Nkunda's forces. A cessation of hostilities would not only allow humanitarian actors to respond to the needs of the affected population, but would also provide a window to bring all the parties, including regional actors, back to the table to restore the Goma Peace Agreement. We strongly believe that there cannot be a lasting military solution to this conflict.

In conjunction with the escalating violence, we are troubled by reports that hate speech inciting ethnic violence has been on the rise in eastern Congo. Such rhetoric risks entrenching the conflict, and even worse, could lead to the kind of grassroots ethnic-driven violence that devastated Rwanda in 1994. We therefore urge you to publicly denounce this hate speech and call on national and local leaders to cease such statements. By doing so, you could help to reassure Congolese of all ethnic identities that incitements to ethnic violence will not be tolerated.

Finally, as you are likely aware, there are widespread reports that some members of your military forces continue to transfer weapons to the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) as well as collaborate with them in mining and military operations. We urge you to demonstrate your commitment to implement the Nairobi Communiqué and the Goma Peace Agreement by investigating and breaking any ties that persist between your military and the rebels of the FDLR. You should know that we have also called on President Kagame to ensure that individuals in his government or Rwanda more generally are not providing any support for General Nkunda's forces. As long as such real or perceived ties exist

between armed groups and governments in the region, efforts to achieve peace will continue to be undermined by suspicion and mistrust.

We have both seen firsthand how devastating this conflict has been for the people of eastern Congo and how much war-affected communities there yearn for peace and the rule of law. We hope to work together with you to ensure that the progress made toward peace over the last year is not lost.

Sincerely,



Senator Russell D. Feingold
United States Senator



Senator Sam Brownback
United States Senator

CC: U.S. Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer
U.S. Ambassador William Garvelink