

US Peace Agreements and the Business Deal Will Not Protect the DRC: We Call on the Congolese State to Follow Another Path

Strategic Note from MOSSAC^[1]
25 August 2025

Introduction

After decades of armed conflict, followed by this past year's invasion and violent occupation of strategic parts of the North Kivu and South Kivu provinces, the Congolese people desperately long to live in peace and govern themselves. Now that two "agreements" have been presented – one between the DRC and Rwanda (Washington), and the other between the M23-Rwanda and the DRC (Doha, Qatar) – the population hopes these documents will lead to peace, but fears the persistence of occupying forces and continued fighting. To dispel this confusion, it is necessary to examine the current facts and the historical context of the fighting directly.

Members of MOSSAC and its Coordination Committee, almost all based in eastern DRC, compiled relevant data on the ground and submitted their analysis through two surveys. They concluded that:

- The peace agreements are being violated and not respected.
- Even if implemented, these agreements will not bring peace, justice or sovereignty to the DRC.
- Other approaches are more likely to lead to peace, justice, and sovereignty.

The Three Agreements

The following three agreements were drawn up in recent months under US leadership (see attached annexes):

- **Annex 1.** Washington Peace Agreement – DRC and Rwanda – 27 June 2025
- **Annex 2.** Doha Declaration of Principles – DRC and M23 – 19 July 2025
- **Annex 3.** Statement of Principles of the Regional Economic Integration Framework – 1 August 2025

These Agreements Will Not Be Respected by Rwanda or by M23/AFC

Two researchers (one Congolese and one Rwandan) recently co-authored a history of Rwandan invasions of eastern DRC since 1996[2], documenting how Rwanda repeatedly trained, supported, and controlled armed militias in the DRC as deniable proxy forces. Each time, the same pretext was used (protecting Rwanda from Hutu génocidaires such as the FDLR) with the same objective (seizing territories and resources, mainly smuggling Congolese minerals into Rwanda to be processed and sold as Rwandan minerals).

The current occupation of parts of North Kivu and South Kivu by the M23 is a successful version of the same pattern repeated since 1996. Reports, including those summarised in a podcast by *Rwandans' Rights*[3], show how President Paul Kagame uses "peace negotiations" to:

- sow confusion among regional governments and the international community about Rwanda's true intentions,

- delay accountability or troop withdrawal, and
- ultimately remain in the DRC under a negotiated deal, citing the need to protect Rwanda's borders.

Since the signing of the Washington Peace Agreement and the Doha Declaration of Principles, their terms have not been respected, and human rights violations committed by the M23 in the occupied region have even increased. Congolese government spokesman Patrick Muyaya said the declaration *"takes into account the red lines we have always defended, including the non-negotiable withdrawal"* of the M23.[4]

But just hours after the Doha Declaration of Principles was signed, Benjamin Mbonimpa, head of the AFC/M23 delegation, said: *"Nowhere in the Declaration of Principles does it say that the AFC/M23 should withdraw. The AFC/M23 will not retreat, not even a single meter. We remain where we are."*[5] Meanwhile, Bertrand Bisimwa, an M23 leader, said the declaration *"is not about withdrawal but about mechanisms to empower the state, allowing it to assume its prerogatives and obligations,"* and M23 spokesman Lawrence Kanyuka told The Associated Press in a phone call: *"We are in Goma with the population and we are not going to leave."*[6] Moreover, Willy Ngoma, one of the M23 leaders, declared on X: *"Go tell those who think the AFC/M23 should leave the liberated zones, they're dreaming. We will retreat 5 km, and the government coalition will also retreat 5 km; to create a buffer zone from the front lines."*[7]

Other violations of the agreements include:

- Goma and Bukavu remain under violent occupation by the M23/AFC, where people are regularly arrested, kidnapped, interrogated, forced to fight alongside the M23, imprisoned, tortured, and/or killed by the M23.[8]
- A report by a UN group of experts published in early July indicated that Rwanda exercised command and control over the M23 and supported the group's attempt to conquer territory in eastern Congo.[9]
- "The Congolese government stated... that for the period from July 2 to August 2, 2025, alone, more than 125 cases of rape were recorded, hundreds of forced recruitments, including of children, more than 300 acts of torture, sometimes against students, systematic looting, house burnings, arbitrary arrests in inhumane conditions, as well as the relocation of unidentified populations into territories under M23 control." [10]
- As of early August 2025, civilians were still being killed, and the Rwandan-backed AFC/M23 rebellion continued to expand in South Kivu province.[11] At least four people lost their lives in violent fighting between the AFC/M23 and Wazalendo, reported on August 7 and 8, 2025, in the Walungu and Kabare areas of South Kivu province.[12]
- The UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) reported that the M23 killed 169 civilians in Rutshuru territory, North Kivu province, mainly farmers temporarily camping in their fields for the plowing season, whom they attacked with guns and machetes, starting on July 9.[13] But it is now known that at least 319 people in Rutshuru territory were killed by the M23 in July 2025, according to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk.[14] Bertrand Bisimwa, deputy coordinator of the AFC, called the report "non-factual" and denounced what he saw as an attempt to "demonize" the armed movement by certain humanitarian and political actors.[15] Similarly, the Rwandan government described the

contents of Volker Türk's report as false accusations, and questioned the credibility and methodology of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.[16]

- AFC/M23 forces continue to conduct cordon and search operations in Goma. The largest took place in May 2025, during which 4,000 civilians were arrested and 107 killed. However, at least two cordon and search operations took place in August, despite the signing of the Declaration of Principles on July 19. On August 19, starting at 1:00 a.m., rebel forces cordoned off the Kyeshero neighborhood, forcing many residents to leave their homes for an identity check that took place at a local church. Following this check, several arrests were made, although the M23 did not disclose the exact number. A similar cordon and search operation took place on August 6 in the Mabanga-Sud neighborhood (Karisimbi commune) in Goma, where several people were also arrested and taken to the Unity Stadium. Some of the youths were released, while others were taken to black sites of the Special Intelligence Division.[17]
- Other smaller cordon and search operations were carried out in Goma and Bukavu during August, according to victims and eyewitnesses.[18]
- Congolese army spokesman Sylvain Ekenge stated in mid-August that the M23 had launched "multiple attacks" against army positions in the east of the country; the attacks were "almost daily," he said, and represented an "intentional and clear violation" of the peace agreements signed in Doha and Washington, DC.[19]
- The DRC will not be able to "neutralize" the FDLR as required by the Washington agreement, given that the FDLR members are located in territory controlled by the M23 and therefore inaccessible to the FARDC; Rwandan President Kagame has already stated that this could derail the agreement.[20], [21], [22], [23]
- It is estimated that there are still between 7,000 and 12,000 Rwandan soldiers in the DRC.[24],[25]
- Rwandan President Kagame continues to threaten the DRC, notably claiming that he could march 2,000 km (the distance between Kigali and the Congolese capital, Kinshasa); it should be noted that threatening language is expressly prohibited by the agreement.[26]
- Banks have not yet been allowed to open by the M23/AFC occupation in North and South Kivu provinces, as required.[27]
- Peace negotiations between the DRC and the M23 were scheduled to begin in Doha on 8 August and conclude on 18 August; however, they had not yet taken place as of 25 August.[28],[29]
- The M23 claims that the failure to release its prisoners is preventing it from making progress towards a peace agreement. However, a source within the Congolese government said that the release of prisoners was to be negotiated rather than a condition for the talks to continue.[30]

Even if Fully Implemented, the Agreements Will Not Protect the DRC and May Worsen the Situation

According to Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Dr. Denis Mukwege: “In an effort to reach peace, Kinshasa has, through the Washington and Doha agreements, legalised the plundering of our resources and legitimised the occupation by our aggressors.”[31],[32],[33]

Key risks include:

- The three agreements (the Washington and Doha accords, as well as Trump's "Business Deal") will legitimize and normalize the status quo of invasion, occupation, and resource plunder.
- These three agreements will allow Rwanda and the M23 to remain in place indefinitely, as it will be impossible for the FARDC to "neutralize" the FDLR in M23-controlled territory.
- By failing to hold Rwanda and its proxy, the M23, accountable for the numerous crimes against humanity they have committed, these three agreements encourage them to continue their aggression in the future, and even reward them with trade deals. As a recent article in Foreign Policy stated: "The war and the kleptocratic system will also continue unless consequences are provided for illicit behavior."[34]
- These three agreements will eliminate the DRC's political sovereignty and territorial integrity, essentially functioning as a new constitutional clause, sharing power with Rwanda and the United States.
- These three agreements will eliminate the DRC's economic sovereignty over its land and resources, and will favor the interests of American companies seeking to exploit critical minerals in the DRC.
- The Trump Business Deal will allow the United States to grant trade favors in the DRC to American donors, friends, and political supporters[35]; see, for example, the situation of Gentry Beach, a close political ally of Donald Trump, who is involved in negotiations to secure rights to the Rubaya coltan mine seized by the M23.[36]
- Trump's trade deal will antagonize China, which already owns significant mineral reserves (through private companies) that feed its industrial supply chain, especially if the United States attempts to seize some of these properties. This could disrupt established contracts between China and the DRC and force China to withdraw from major infrastructure deals.

The DRC Must Withdraw from the “Peace Agreements” and the Business Deal

We denounce the continued violations by Rwanda and M23, which perpetuate death and suffering for the Congolese people in the occupied provinces and neighbouring regions. These violations strip the agreements of all legitimacy.

These agreements are likely to fail due to the lack of the necessary process and elements for lasting peace[37], including:

- serious commitment from the parties and the ability to commit to their terms;
- precise wording, with carefully drafted and unambiguous provisions;
- clear and realistic deadlines;

- robust implementation provisions: third states or international organizations should be mandated to oversee this phase, provide security guarantees, or even deploy a peacekeeping operation; these actors must be engaged in the process and cannot pursue their own interests.

Moreover, even if fully implemented, these deals would cause severe and lasting harm to the DRC leading to a loss of sovereignty and the de facto balkanisation of the state. They represent a *neo-colonial bargain of “peace in exchange for exploitation”*, which cannot resolve a conflict fuelled by the exploitation of natural resources.

Moreover, as explained above, even if these agreements were fully implemented, this would result in serious and lasting harm to the DRC, including the loss of sovereignty and the de facto balkanization of the state.

Such a "neocolonial bargain of peace for exploitation" does not send a positive signal. And it is unlikely to contribute to ending an armed conflict fueled by the exploitation of natural resources.[38]

Instead of remaining tied to these damaging deals, we call on the DRC to pursue the following path:

(1) The DRC must call on the UN to require and enforce Resolution 2773, adopted by the UN Security Council in February 2025.

(2) The DRC must request the establishment of an International Criminal Tribunal to investigate, prosecute, and establish the consequences of crimes committed against the DRC since 1996.

(3) The DRC must call for additional and more severe international sanctions against the aggressors who invaded and occupied eastern DRC.

(4) The DRC must establish an inclusive and democratic dialogue involving all Congolese actors or their representatives, including:

- the central government (Senate and National Assembly),
- civil society,
- traditional authorities[39],
- opposition parties,
- various religious factions[40], and
- members of the business community willing to accept democratic principles and the rule of law.

These actors must design and lead negotiations for a peace agreement that respects Congo's political, territorial, and economic sovereignty, reflects the aspirations of the Congolese people, and secures a sustainable future.

Attachments:

- [Annex 1. Washington Peace Agreement – DRC and Rwanda – 27 June 2025](#)
- [Annex 2. Doha Declaration of Principles – DRC and M23 – 19 July 2025](#)
- [Annex 3. Statement of Principles of the Regional Economic Integration Framework – 1 August 2025](#)
- [Annex 4. MOSSAC Signatories – 25 August 2025](#)

References: General Critiques of the Agreements

The Conversation: <https://theconversation.com/4-things-every-peace-agreement-needs-and-how-the-drc-rwanda-deal-measures-up-260944>

The Conversation: <https://theconversation.com/drc-and-rwanda-sign-a-us-brokered-peace-deal-what-are-the-chances-of-its-success-260066>

Denis Mukwege: <https://www.therwandan.com/fr/rdc-denis-mukwege-fustige-laccord-de-paix-signe-a-washington-et-denonce-une-trahison-de-la-souverainete-congolaise/>

Denis Mukwege: <https://actualite.cd/2025/08/02/genocost-la-guerre-lest-sinscrit-dans-une-extermiation-planifiee-depuis-1998-dit-denis>

Denis Mukwege: <https://enquete.cd/2025/08/02/dr-mukwege-alerte-sur-un-risque-de-balkanisation-de-la-rdc-a-lest/>

Denis Mukwege: <https://actualite.cd/2025/08/11/mukwege-les-espoirs-places-dans-les-pretendus-cessez-le-feu-issus-des-accords-de>

Kambale Musavuli: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/27/drc-and-rwanda-to-strike-trump-brokered-peace-deal-all-to-know>

Kambale Musavuli et autres: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/7/1/turning-point-or-pointless-turn-will-dr-congo-rwanda-deal-bring-peace>

MOSSAC et autres: <https://globalpressjournal.com/africa/democratic-republic-of-congo/drc-rwanda-peace-pact-sparks-hope-skepticism/>

MOSSAC et autres: <https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/featured-report/profit-peace>

Thomas Luhaka : <https://actualite.cd/2025/07/13/rdc-la-stp-et-pona-congo-interrogent-la-place-du-peuple-dans-les-differents-processus-de>

Thomas Luhaka: <https://actualite.cd/2025/07/05/rdc-rwanda-thomas-luhaka-regrette-le-bradage-de-la-resolution-de-lonu-dans-laccord-de>

Vava Tampa: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/7/1/turning-point-or-pointless-turn-will-dr-congo-rwanda-deal-bring-peace>

References: Citations for specific statements

- [1] The Mobilization for the Safeguarding of Congolese Sovereignty and Autonomy (MOSSAC) is an ad hoc coalition of more than 80 Congolese civil society groups and lawyers, formed to convey our concerns to the Congolese people and their elected officials and traditional leaders, as well as to the international community and decision-makers around the world.
- [2] Kapend, R & Mugenzi, R. 2025. *Kagame and the DRC: The Failed Balkanisation Agenda*. Independently published; 148 pp.
- [3] <https://youtu.be/MV2G71WymDs?si=VqDfZ54pKf1FaNv8>
- [4] <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/7/19/dr-congo-m23-rebels-sign-deal-in-qatar-to-end-fighting-in-eastern-congo>
- [5] <https://okapinews.net/politique/doha-rdc-a-peine-signe-la-declaration-de-principes-deja-violee-lafc-m23-refuse-tout-retrait-des-zones-occupees/>
- [6] <https://apnews.com/article/congo-m23-rebels-peace-qatar-rwanda-f80166117d557991896ef89d4cd3a324>
- [7] <https://x.com/WillyNG0MA/status/1948786572356141502>
- [8] communications personnelles avec les membres du MOSSAC à Goma et Bukavu en juin, juillet et août 2025
- [9] <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/rwanda-exercises-command-control-over-m23-rebels-say-un-experts-2025-07-02/>
- [10] <https://actualite.cd/2025/08/15/caricature-massacre-de-rutshuru-vives-condamnations-et-indignation-internationale>
- [11] <https://actualite.cd/2025/08/11/mukwege-les-espoirs-places-dans-les-pretendus-cessez-le-feu-issus-des-accords-de>
- [12] <https://www.dw.com/sw/kongo-m23-walaumiana-baada-mazungumzo-amani-kukwama/a-73569258>
- [13] <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/un-says-scores-farmers-killed-congo-endangering-trumps-peace-2025-07-31/>
- [14] <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/m23-rebels-killed-319-civilians-east-congo-july-un-rights-chief-says-2025-08-06/>
- [15] <https://actualite.cd/2025/08/11/nord-kivu-lue-indignee-par-le-massacre-de-nombreux-civils-attribue-lafcm23-et-appelle>
- [16] <https://actualite.cd/index.php/2025/08/11/tueries-massives-des-civils-rutshuru-le-rwanda-rejette-limplication-de-rdf-comme>
- [17] <https://actualite.cd/2025/08/19/rdc-encore-plusieurs-personnes-arretees-lors-dun-bouclage-mene-par-les-rebelles-de>
- [18] personal communications from people in Goma and Bukavu who were trapped or who witnessed these operations
- [19] <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/19/m23-dr-congo-peace-talks-in-doha-stalled-what-next>
- [20] <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/rwandas-kagame-unsure-whether-peace-deal-with-congo-will-hold-2025-07-04/>
- [21] <https://www.therwandan.com/dr-congo-rwanda-fdlr-welcomes-peace-deal-and-calls-for-inclusive-political-dialogue/>
- [22] <https://actualite.cd/2025/07/05/rdc-rwanda-thomas-luhaka-regrette-le-bradage-de-la-resolution-de-lonu-dans-laccord-de>
- [23] <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/rwandan-rebels-fate-clouds-trumps-vision-mineral-rich-congo-2025-07-23/>
- [24] <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/rwanda-democratic-republic-congo-set-sign-peace-agreement-washington-2025-06-27/>
- [25] <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/us-wants-rwandan-troops-out-congo-before-peace-deal-signed-sources-say-2025-06-10/>
- [26] <https://www.therwandan.com/kigali-paul-kagame-issues-stern-warning-to-kinshasa-during-fprs-31st-anniversary-celebrations/>
- [27] <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/congo-m23-rebels-sign-declaration-principles-end-fighting-sources-say-2025-07-18/>
- [28] <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/m23-rebel-group-says-no-invitation-received-doha-peace-talks-with-congo-2025-08-07/>
- [29] <https://www.dw.com/sw/kongo-m23-walaumiana-baada-mazungumzo-amani-kukwama/a-73569258>

- [30] <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/congo-m23-rebels-miss-deadline-reach-doha-peace-deal-2025-08-18/>
- [31] <https://actualite.cd/2025/08/02/genocost-la-guerre-lest-sinscrit-dans-une-extermiation-planifiee-depuis-1998-dit-denis>
- [32] <https://enquete.cd/2025/08/02/dr-mukwege-alerte-sur-un-risque-de-balkanisation-de-la-rdc-a-lest/>
- [33] <https://www.therwandan.com/dr-congo-denis-mukwege-slams-washington-peace-deal-as-betrayal-of-national-sovereignty/>
- [34] <https://foreignpolicy.com/2025/08/05/washington-should-prioritize-transparency-and-sanctions-in-congolese-critical-minerals-deal>
- [35] <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/kobold-metals-backed-by-bezos-gates-secures-deal-disputed-congo-lithium-deposit-2025-07-18/>
- [36] <https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/featured-report/profit-peace>
- [37] <https://theconversation.com/4-things-every-peace-agreement-needs-and-how-the-drc-rwanda-deal-measures-up-260944>
- [38] <https://theconversation.com/4-things-every-peace-agreement-needs-and-how-the-drc-rwanda-deal-measures-up-260944>
- [39] <https://actualite.cd/2025/07/18/lu-a-appellee-assurer-linclusivite-du-processus-de-paix-en-rdc-en-associant-lensemble-des>
- [40] <https://actualite.cd/2025/08/12/pacte-social-pour-la-paix-et-le-bien-vivre-ensemble-en-rdc-et-dans-la-region-des-grands>