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*Initiative for Equality*

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**Massacres and Mass Rapes Against Indigenous People in DR Congo  
May Constitute Genocide or Crimes Against Humanity**

The African Great Lakes regional network of *Initiative for Equality* (IfE), a global network of organizations addressing inequalities, has just released a report documenting massacres and mass rapes committed against the Indigenous Batwa people in the Province of Tanganyika, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The report includes results of a January 2019 investigation into atrocities against the Indigenous group during 2016 through 2018. The Executive Summary and Full Report can be accessed in English or French (see links below).

The Indigenous Batwa people, the most ancient inhabitants of this region, have been the subject of massive land grabs, rights violations, sexual violence and killings across DRC over the past three decades. The Batwa (also known as Twa, Mbuti, Bambuti, and Pygmies) are targeted for several reasons, including the fact that they hold traditional indigenous land rights under international law, which are coveted by other ethnic groups and economic actors for their minerals and timber. Western conservation NGOs have also been accused of allowing the Batwa and related peoples to be killed in order to drive them out of nature preserves, their traditional lands.

The investigation team was able to locate and gather information from a total of over 239 individuals, mostly in IDP (internally displaced persons) camps. There were seven known events during which atrocities took place, for which the investigation team attempted to gather documentation. All these took place in Tanganyika Province, DRC, during a 13-month period between November 2016 to November 2017, inclusive. These seven events resulted in the deaths of an estimated 1,110 Batwa people.

Coupled with several other such events from the same region but outside that narrow timeframe, investigators are relatively certain of over 1,961 deaths of Batwa men, women and children, and well over 2,110 rapes of Batwa, primarily girls and women, between 2015 through 2018. Of the survivors encountered, more than 456 were documented to be in urgent need of medical and psychosocial care for their injuries and trauma. All the above numbers are thought to be gross underestimates due to the extreme difficulty in gathering this information.

The Katanga region is well-known for its mineral wealth, particularly copper and cobalt, with a major developer being Katanga Mining Ltd., majority-owned by Swiss commodity trader Glencore DCC. Various factions have been vying for control of the mineral wealth in the Katanga region (of which Tanganyika Province is a part) since the early 1960s or before. This has led to multiple conflicts – including a secession attempt, and the 1961 death of UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld as he flew in to negotiate an end to the mining-related civil war there.

Despite the resource wealth, most local communities are extremely poor. Reasons given for the inter-ethnic conflict, discussed at length in the report, include land grabs by neighboring non-indigenous Baluba and Batabwa communities, as well as long-standing discrimination against and exploitation of the Indigenous Batwa. The report notes that regardless of original reasons for the conflict, a cycle of fear and revenge is now being perpetuated by lack of access to security and legal justice. According to report author Deborah Rogers, the Team Leader for the DRC region at the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations in New York stated in a 2018 meeting that MONUSCO's "hands are tied" regarding this conflict.

The report concludes that, under the definitions provided by the UN's Office on Genocide Prevention, the atrocities documented probably qualify as Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity, War Crimes, and perhaps as Ethnic Cleansing.

Report authors, most of whom remain unnamed due to concerns about personal security, call on the national government of DRC and the international community to:

- protect the lives and well-being of survivors and victims in IDP (internally displaced persons) camps and affected villages, and others who may be targeted in the future;
- provide all care and assistance needed to restore physical health, emotional strength, human dignity, and a reasonable means of subsistence to these survivors;
- alter the larger context by adopting and enforcing national and international policies that value and protect the lives and rights of the Indigenous Batwa people living in this region, and alter the economic circumstances so they no longer create distress and incentivize land grabs which can lead to such attacks; and
- seek justice for the victims and provide disincentives for future attacks, by prosecuting the perpetrators of these atrocities.

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#### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Report in English: [OFF THE RECORD Apr 2019 EN](#)

Report in French: [UNE SITUATION IGNORÉE Apr 2019 FR](#)

Sexual violence against Batwa women: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4bf389f82.pdf>

Indigenous land rights: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>

Conservation interests allow Batwa to be killed:

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/tomwarren/wwf-world-wide-fund-nature-parks-torture-death>

Swiss mining interests (Glencore) in Katanga region: <http://www.katangamining.com/>

Conflicts in Katanga region: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/jan/30/drc-democratic-republic-congo-katanga-humanitarian-catastrophe-un>

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/democratic-republic-congo/katanga-tensions-drcs-mineral-heartland>

Death of Dag Hammarskjöld: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/12/former-raf-pilot-shot-down-un-chief-dag-hammarskjold-1961-plane>

Definitions from UN's Office on Genocide Prevention:

<https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.shtml>