

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

August 3, 2012

Dear President Kagame:

We are writing as a bipartisan group of legislators to express our deep concern about the recent and growing conflict in eastern Congo. The violence in eastern Congo has severe consequences on the local populations, puts the gains Rwanda has made in stability and living standards over the last 18 years at risk, destabilizes the DRC, and sets back all of Central Africa from the progress it so badly needs to make.

Even more dismaying is Rwanda's role in the latest surge in violence in eastern Congo. Rwanda's support for the rebellion in eastern Congo has been well documented by the United Nations. This evidence has been supported by substantial accounts from other sources, including reports by impartial eyewitnesses. All of this leads us to be absolutely convinced that Rwanda is involved in supporting the unrest in the Kivus. However, your government continues to insist that these extensive accounts are false. The pretense that Rwanda is not facilitating rebels in eastern Congo must end, all support for armed groups must stop immediately, and a productive path forward must be taken. No constructive dialogue can take place between the Rwandan and Congolese governments as long as support continues for proxy militias.

We were pleased to see the agreement reached at the African Union Summit earlier this month on an international force to oversee the Rwanda/DRC border. It is a worthy first step, but it is far from clear how this force will be implemented, and it will not ultimately address the underlying problems between Rwanda and DRC or in the broader region.

We believe a productive path forward includes several steps, and leadership from Rwanda and Congo is essential in this endeavor. First, the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of Congo must be respected and supported. Second, the legitimate concerns for the safety of all ethnic groups in eastern Congo must be accommodated, with an emphasis on non-military initiatives. Third, the legitimate economic ties that Rwandans and other countries have in eastern Congo need to be facilitated. Lastly, illegal economic activity—including smuggling—in the DRC that violates Congolese law and international agreements must end. Enhancing transparency and regulation of the minerals sector, land reform and ensuring property rights would be beneficial to all stakeholders.

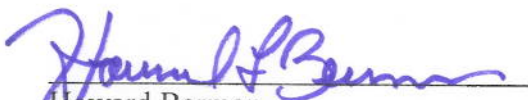
However, none of these steps can be taken until you and President Kabila sit down to discuss them. We strongly urge you to engage in a dialogue to begin resolving these long-standing disputes. Continuing to try and achieve your aims through proxy means is causing enormous human suffering, large-scale displacement of civilians, and stunted economic growth throughout the region.

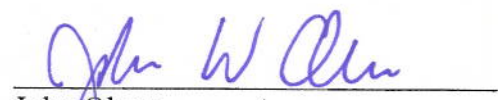
The conflict in eastern Congo and Rwanda's role in it deeply troubles many Members of Congress. We believe the continuing unrealized potential of the peoples and countries of Central Africa is a loss for the whole international community. Actions that violate international law, foment violence, and thwart progress are not only unacceptable, but self-defeating.

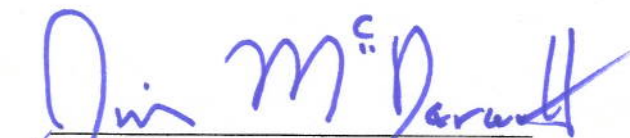
Given the evidence before us, we will have to take a hard look at continued bilateral assistance. Furthermore, the complete lack of transparency by the Rwandan government, regarding the DRC as well as more broadly, would lead us to register our concerns in international forums including the United Nations and the World Bank. We support the actions the U.S. State Department has taken so far, including the suspension of Foreign Military Assistance to Rwanda and calling for a dialogue between Rwanda and the DRC.


Rwanda has been a great partner of the U.S. on security matters throughout the region and in development. We do not want the growing conflict in the DRC to jeopardize this partnership. We believe it is time for an open dialogue and for a roadmap to stability to be created, led by President Kabila, you, and Central Africa's other elected leaders, with the involvement of local communities in the Kivus. As supporters of democratic reform and the peaceful self determination of the people of Central Africa, we will support you in these endeavors and continue to closely watch developments between Rwanda and the DRC.

Sincerely,


Howard Berman
Member of Congress

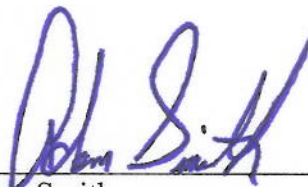

John Olver
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Earl Blumenauer
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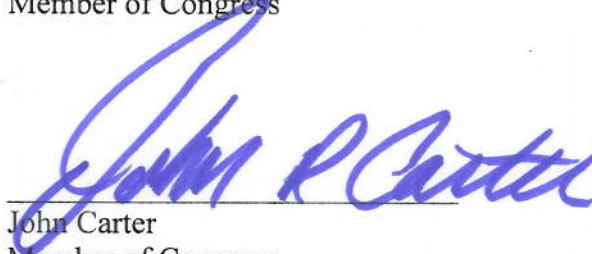
Brad Miller
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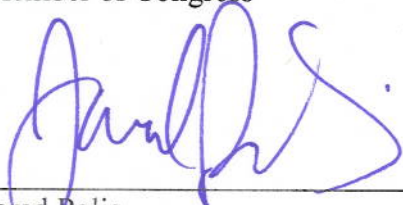
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Member of Congress



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