

October 16, 2009

The Honorable Donna Edwards
318 Cannon House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Edwards:

The Friends of the Congo is an advocacy organization based in Washington, DC whose primary objective is to bring about peaceful and lasting change in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is for this reason we are writing to request a meeting with you and other members of the Congressional Black Caucus to discuss the injustices taking place in the heart of Africa, which is in large part fueled by U.S. foreign policy and corporate interests.

Since 1996, the Democratic Republic of Congo has been the epicenter of the deadliest war since World War II, leading to the deaths of nearly six million people. Should one take Darfur, Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia and event the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and add them up, it would not equal the number dead as a result of conflict or conflict related causes in the Congo. Yet, Doctors Without Borders has reported consistently for the past ten years that Congo has been among the top ten most underreported stories worldwide.

Combatants on all sides routinely use rape and sexual violence as a weapon to destroy women, families, and communities. Over 200,000 women have been raped in the course of combat. The perpetrators of sexual violence have acted with impunity and have not been held accountable for their actions.

This conflict is fueled by rebel groups illegal trade in minerals such as coltan (used in cell phones and laptop computers), 64% of the world's reserve is found in Congo. According to several United Nations reports dating from 2001, our allies, Rwanda and Uganda along with Western corporations are the primary beneficiaries of the looting of Congo's minerals. These minerals are vital to our military, aerospace, technology, electronics, and automobile industries.

We hope that a meeting with you and the Congressional Black Caucus is imminent as we work to break the silence and bring an end to the violence in this region.

Please feel free to contact to contact me at _____.

Thank you for your time and effort.

Sincerely,