

AIDS Advocacy Group says UN Has Failed Congolese Women Voice of America Joe DeCapua
2 September 2010

2

The mass rapes of over 500 women, including 20 children, that occurred in the Eastern province of the DRC between 30 July and 2 August and the failure of the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO), to prevent and protect civilians have provoked a wave of criticism in the media and among civil society. On 31 August, MONUSCO launched a special operation known as 'Shop Window' that reinforced the UN Mission by over 700 peacekeepers to increase its ability to protect citizens. See

[here](#)

for more info

On 7 September, Assistant to Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Atul Khare and Special Representative of Sexual Violence in Conflict Margot Wallström,

[briefed](#)

the UN Security Council. They both recommended targeted sanctions against leaders of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and other perpetrators, insisting that they be brought to justice. Mr. Khare added that MONUSCO needed more night patrols as well as better communications and information-sharing tools such as standardized questionnaires and high frequency radios for the most isolated areas. Ms. Wallström pointed out that a collective effort, involving DPKO, UNIFEM and troop-contributing countries, would allow appropriate training for peacekeepers to better stop and prevent sexual violence in a timely fashion.

Unfortunately as AIDS-Free World co-Director Paula Donova points out, in spite of international efforts and media mobilization in the past few weeks, the situation in DR Congo remains extremely volatile, while media coverage gradually fades away and the UN attention shifts to other matters.

An international HIV/AIDS advocacy group says the United Nations has failed the women of the Democratic Republic of Congo. AIDS-Free World says it's time for the U.N. to stop passing resolutions on the Congo and take action.

The estimated number of rapes in the DRC since 1996 range anywhere from 200,000 to about 600,000 (...) (...) AIDS-Free World Co-Director Paula Donovan says despite troops, resources and good intentions, the United Nations offers little or no protection to women.

"In every single aspect of its work," she says, "the United Nations has failed the women of the Congo. It seems never to reach a top priority and sustain its place at the top of the U.N.'s concerns for any period of time. Something like the recent spate of rapes occurs. It's in the

headlights for a couple of days and then it just disappears.”(...)

(...)“If the U.N. just went back to those shelves and pulled out and dusted off every resolution that it has agreed upon since 1996 – including, importantly, **one that was agreed five years ago this week – the responsibility to protect – and act on them, then we could have some hope that the women of the Congo would actually be protected by more than just goodwill and words**,” she says (...)

(...) “It’s just very easy to ignore the DRC because war in the DRC poses no immediate threat to the Western world, which holds the power and basically decides where we’ll intervene and where we’ll turn a blind eye,” she says (...)

(...) The United Nations is instituting more night patrols and random checks on villages. It will also improve communication in areas where there is no mobile phone coverage by installing high frequency radio transmitters (...)

See
[full article](#)