

CALL FOR ACTION: Implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and the ICGLR Kampala Declaration in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Introduction

The United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 was unanimously adopted by the United Nations Security Council on 31 October 2000. The UNSCR 1325 commonly referred to as Women in Peace and Security (WPS) is regarded, as a key milestone in international legal framework that recognizes the excessive impact of war on women, and puts into proper context the role women should play in conflict management, conflict resolution and sustainable peace.

The Kampala declaration was adopted at The International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) by heads of states in 2011. The declaration is a commitment by states parties to prevent, punish and respond to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in the region. It defines actions to be undertaken to prevent the occurrence of SGBV, end impunity for sexual crimes and provide support with legal, financial, medical and psychosocial support.

Action for Solidarity Rights/Action pour les Droits Solidaires (ADS)¹ recognizes that individual states have varying efforts in promoting gender and women's rights. However, very little is recognized at different established peace and security mechanisms on the implementation of both the UNSCR 1325 and the Kampala Declaration in regard to the ongoing conflict in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. This obligation cannot be left to the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo alone. Moreover, consultations of CSOs especially women led organizations as monitors of sexual violence committed against women and young girls and as advocates for women and girls' rights has not taken shape at various levels and platforms where peace and security are discussed.

Throughout this conflict, women and girls have not been protected. Despite the presence of United Nations Mission - MONUSCO, EACRF, Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism (ICGLR-EJVM), SAMIDRC, thousands of women and young girls have been raped and defiled respectively. For instance, between December and January 2025, ADS visited three camps of Bulengo in Goma, Lushagala in Mugunga and Bushagara in Nyiragongo where testimonies of rape and defilement of young girls and women of between 11 and 70 years of age were recorded.

¹ Action for Solidarity Rights / *Action pour les Droits Solidaires (ADS)* is a peace-building and social justice organization that contributes to a fair and peaceful society in which fundamental human rights and freedoms are realized sustainably. ADS is compliant with all the requirements of the Law no. 004/2001 of July 20, 2001, laying down general provisions applicable to non-profit associations and Public Utility Establishments in the Democratic Republic of Congo. ADS legal personality is decreed by a ministerial decree – **ARRETE MINISTERIEL N°335/CAB/ME/MIN/J&GS/2024 OF 10 FEBRUARY 2024.**

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This call for action seeks to draw the attention of all actors and stakeholders involved in mediating and negotiating peace and security in the DRC to reflect upon the spirit of the UNSCR 1325 and the Kampala Declaration in managing the conflict in the DRC. We particularly implore all actors and stakeholders to dedicate their attention to the following:

1. Implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and Kampala Declaration in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

The domestication and implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and the Kampala declaration - as a matter of practice - has been through incorporation within national laws and through the development and implementation of national action plans (NAPs); a domestication requirement prescribed by the resolution itself. However, the current crisis in the Eastern DRC does not offer this opportunity. The uncontrolled armed groups and the undisciplined government forces defies the established normative framework to deal with the current situation in the Eastern DRC. The established mediation and conflict resolution mechanisms will need to be intentional at incorporating the spirit and letter of both the resolution and the declaration in all their deliberations.

2. The role of key mediators, peace negotiators actors and stakeholders (EAC, SADC, ICGLR, international community...

To date, there is little or no evidence of what is being done at high level mediation and peace negotiations in relation to the consideration and implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and Kampala declaration. This absence of action is noted by limited protection and prevention mechanisms against sexual violence committee against women and girls' but also the clear absence of women in established peace and security frameworks for Eastern DRC. For instance, women have not been appointed in any of the key mediation and facilitation roles; implying that, women voices will either be represented at high level by male or will most likely not be represented at all. A similar example, since the deployment of ICGLR-EJVM in the Eastern DRC in 2012, only one female has once been deployed by Kenya in the ICGLR-EJVM. This practice does not reflect the spirit of both the UNSCR and the Kampala declaration. The absence of women and women voices in these mechanisms could be one of the reasons why prevention and protection mechanisms have not attracted the deserved attention.

3. Participation of women in peace and security (WPS)

Participation of women, particularly women led human rights organizations in peace and security in the Eastern DRC remains very low. This is exacerbated by limited consultation by states mandated mechanisms, lack of coordination between the mandated mechanisms and CSOs as well as within CSOs themselves and absence of clear attribution of responsibilities in the implementation of both the UNSCR 1325 and the Kampala declaration. Moreover, there is no clearly established framework for

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sharing well analyzed and verified information. This has led to proliferation of highly sensational and manipulated information that nourish political propaganda.

4. Cases of sexual violence committed against women and girls in EDRC

Sexual violence has been employed both for pleasure and as a weapon of war, resulting into hundreds of thousands of women sexually abused. For instance, by end February 2025, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reported over 50,000 cases of gender-based violence in 2023 and over 56,000 cases in 2024. According to the same source, nearly 500 cases of sexual violence were reported within a single week in the Goma area, including more than 150 involving children. In the visits to the IDPs, ADS recorded testimonies of women who had been targeted on the basis of ethnic profiling.

During the visits at the IDP camps, ADS observed many cases of pregnancies and children born out of rape and defilement. The trauma resulting from these heinous crimes and the impact of war have far reaching consequences to the victims for several generations to come. Many of the victims have gone back to their villages with pain, perpetual indignity, trauma, many infected with HIV and other STDs and with no hope for justice. Moreover, these victims continue to live a cruel and life challenging difficulties such as food insecurity, limited or no source energy and the general lack of basic livelihood essentials.

Recommendations

1. ADS recommends all mandated relevant actors and stakeholders in the DRC conflict to invoke the spirit and letter of the UNSCR 1325 and the Kampala Declaration in all the deliberations and actions adopted during conflict mediation and peace negotiations relating to the conflict in the DRC.
2. ADS recommends all mandated relevant actors and stakeholders in the DRC conflict to assume the responsibility of developing a comprehensive framework with clear strategies of protecting women, children and other vulnerable persons. In pursuing this recommendation, all peace keeping missions must be clearly defined bearing in mind the spirit of the UNSCR and Kampala declaration.
3. ADS recommends all actors, stakeholders and CSOs to mobilize the necessary resources, define key actions for prevention and protection of women, children and other vulnerable citizens and put in place an inclusive framework for supporting victims of sexual violence, monitoring and reporting cases of sexual violence and other abuses and holding accountable those responsible for sexual abuse and GBV.
4. This call for action recommends all mandated mediators and facilitators in the DRC conflict to establish a CSOs collaboration and coordination mechanism for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and the Kampala Declaration. In pursuing this recommendation, responsible actors and stakeholders are called upon to engage directly with women led human rights organizations that are grounded in the conflicts affected areas.



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Done at Goma - DRC, 04th March 2024.

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