

FORCES DEMOCRATIQUES DE LIBERATION DU RWANDA DEMOCRATIC
LIBERATION FORCES OF RWANDA URUGAGA RUHARANIRA
DEMOKARASI NO KUBOHOZA
U RWANDA Tel-Fax: 001-201-794-6542

Email: fdlr@optonline.net

Homepage : www.fdlr.org

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The FDLR refute the assertions made by the MONUC regarding the Forces Combattantes Abacunguzi (FOCA)

Recently, the MONUC spokesman has relayed to the media information stating that FDLR "hardliners" were preventing an estimate of 3000 FOCA troops that are prepared to return to Rwanda. This information is unfounded and the FDLR question the MONUC motives in making such statements.

The FDLR have always supported the right of any Rwandan refugee to return freely to his homeland. In recent months, very few refugees have chosen to leave and return to Rwanda. However, the Rwandan government and the MONUC have hoped that Paul Rwarakabije's return would yield massive defections of FOCA troops. As a fact, their predictions did not materialize.

The FDLR take this opportunity to reiterate that the FOCA do have neither the will nor the capacity of preventing anyone from returning to Rwanda. After the mass killings perpetrated by the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) and its allies since 1996 and ignored by the entire International Community, the FOCA's own mission is primarily to protect Rwandan refugees.

In order to ensure a sustained control of the Eastern Congo, Kagame's regime has created the Front de Liberation de l'Est du Congo (FLEC), a new rebellion group made by former officers and politicians of the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD). While the declared objective of this rebellion is to hunt down "interahamwe" and "Ex-Far", its real mission is to help Kagame continue the looting of the natural resources of that region.

Thus, on January 2 and January 4, militias from the new organization FLEC conducted a raid on the Hombo open markets in Walikale and arrested 25 Rwandan refugees. These refugees were forcefully sent back to Rwanda.

One wonders if demonizing the FOCA is not inscribed in a new strategy to justify the hostilities about to be initiated by the FLEC in which, according to our information, Paul Rwarakabije would play a great role.

Instead of systematically siding with the Rwandan government, the MONUC would be more effective if it would listen to the FDLR and its partners in the Alliance Igihango concerns regarding the DDRRR program. As stated in ICG Report N0. 63, they should refrain from spreading wrong or misleading information.

The FDLR would like to remind the MONUC and the international community that forced repatriation of Rwandan refugees will fail and might even complicate the precarious situation prevalent in the DRC as well as in the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

The Rwandan problem is political and requires political solutions. Demonization, humiliation, corruption, and threats will not achieve the objectives of the DDRRR. However, the FDLR and its partners in the Alliance Igihango are firmly convinced that only an inclusive Inter Rwandan Dialogue, in which the government, the internal and external opposition, and the civil society would be represented will pave the way for genuine new social and political institutions suitable to all Rwandans.

These institutions will be the foundation of the truth on the Rwandan tragedy, and will foster an impartial and fair justice system, promote true reconciliation, and lead to durable peace.

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Dr. Augustin Dukuze
Information Commissioner and Spokesperson