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**COMITE DIRECTEUR – STEERING COMMITTEE**

*“Pour un Etat de Droit, la Démocratie et l’Egalité de chances” ; “For the rule of law, democracy and equal opportunity”*

## PRESS RELEASE

### **RWANDA: AID DONORS SHOULD ENSURE MONEY TO MITIGATE HEALTH AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID\_19 IS NOT BANKROLLING RWANDAN MILITARY EXPEDITIONS IN THE DRC.**

On Easter Sunday 12, April 2020, when Christians all over the world were celebrating Easter on their home screens due to COVID\_19 pandemic lockdown, [the Rwandan special forces were preparing military operations against Rwandan refugees in DRC](#), irrespective of measures to combat the spread of COVID\_19, misery and exposure of population displaced by the fighting and sadly the diversion of financial resources from supporting health services and desperate households. On Easter Monday 13, 2020 the Rwandan cum Congolese soldiers were celebrating victory by displaying for cameras, bodies of slain rebels fighters. Social media show pictures of a crowd of residents including children, invited for the show, without any concern for the spread of corona virus and Ebola or child emotional abuse linked to witnessing such gruesome pictures. [Even if the images are fake](#), the fact that they were published by [a site recognized as close to Rwandan military intelligence](#) is further proof of the direct involvement of the Kigali regime in these operations.

It is beyond belief and is quite cynical that a government requesting a bailout from the IMF to the tune of \$109 million dollars to spend on health and support households and firms affected by corona crisis would be at the same time embarking on expensive external military expeditions. The military hardware and ammunitions are paid in foreign currency and we are concerned that the \$109 million given to the Rwandan regime is a lease of life for the Rwanda regime to finance its external military operations. One can imagine the magnitude of the financial resources to move and feed troops abroad and buy ammunition. We want to mention that the IMF has again issued a statement that it would give debt relief service to the 25 poorest countries which include Rwanda and the DRC which are squandering money on these operations. Their neighbours: Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda are not on the list of the poorest of the poor now engaged in costly military operations.

[These military operations have again demonstrated that the priority of the Rwandan regime](#) is political survival dependent on naked force and not the consent of the people and its political cynicism. In his speech to young people survivors of Tutsi genocide, [on November 13, 2019, General Kabarebe](#), former Minister of Defence and now special adviser to President Kagame on security matters said that the presence of rebels in DRC did not pose a military threat but was only a useful tool to keep people awake about a constant threat from outside: *“When you look at those people like FDLR in the Congo, those who are in Burundi, in Uganda organising themselves in refugee camps of Nkivale and Toro that were left by the refugees of 1959, that is where they are organising themselves, those living in Europe, they are all organising themselves. **The key question is: do we allow them to reach a higher level where they become a threat, or should we keep them in a position where they are useless and don’t pose a threat to us? That is our aim. The stumps that are there, I always say that it is good they are there. When you open your door and meet one of them it makes you be vigilant and not complacent. It checks you. But if you are vigilant and they enter by passing on the side of your blind eye, then it is tragic. You cannot complain of lacking in anything. You had people who came to train you, to give you advice and other support. You yourselves are organised. What you need to know always is that there is a threat against Rwanda.**”*

Instead of spending money on immediate needs of the people, the Rwandan regime found that the time of hardship and the world community busy dealing with effects of CoVid\_19 as an opportunity to engage in expensive military expeditions against a perceived threat.

The operations have also demonstrated how the Rwandan regime ignores international diplomacy when it comes to its survival. These military operations are taking place in total contempt of the plea made by [António Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN, in March in which he said: “I am calling for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world. It is time to put armed conflict on lockdown and focus together on the true fight of our lives”](#). He added: *“Let us take inspiration from coalitions and dialogue slowly taking shape among rival parties to enable joint approaches to Covid\_19”*.

Saudi Arabia responded by declaring that it would stop its military operations in Yemen. Al-Shabaab said it was going to discuss the matter. Only ISIS issued a public statement flatly rejecting this plea, Rwanda and the DRC have used a different style to reject the plea: just do it.

The cynicism of the regime is lying about what it was going to do to help people affected by Covid\_19. The Rwandan President Paul Kagame announced that there was going to be a social protection plan to support the vulnerable across the country during the lockdown period while the Ministry of Local Government promised that it would make [“door to door provision of foodstuffs and groceries to vulnerable homes at village and sector level”](#). The reality is that we have witnessed pictures and videos of people fighting to get one kilo of rice and a kilo of flour for 3 weeks for a family of up to 6 people. Pictures of people who have fallen on roadsides unable to walk because of doing so on empty stomachs. The government has responded in its usual manner: [7 journalists who have been exposing the failure of their social protection plan](#) announced by President Kagame have been arrested, the stubborn are still in jail while others have been released on condition that they don't meddle again in government affairs.

The FDU-Inkingi would like to call on aid donors to ensure that their aid is not subsidising external military expeditions in the DRC or any other act of state terror against political opponents.

The international community should put pressure on the Rwandan government to put internal resources to supporting hungry and sick citizens or honour the President's promise to provide foodstuffs and groceries to vulnerable homes.

Donors should be strict on tying aid to the respect of democratic values, respect of human rights and lasting peace in the Great Lakes region. They should avoid that they are allocated to buying the latest military hardware for its military expeditions in the Democratic Republic of Congo, hunting down political critics inside and outside the country and funding rebel groups to destabilise Burundi and the DRC.

Done in Rouen April 20, 2020

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