



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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December 19, 2022

Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

I write to you in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to raise some important issues regarding the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Our Committee staff continue to work with the Catholic Bishops' Conference (CENCO) and their close alliance with the Church of Christ (ECC) in the Congo. CENCO-ECC report that they are seeing the fruits of their advocacy visit to the United States in November last year and your visit to the DRC in August this year. They have had productive meetings with U.S. Embassy officials and have received funding commitments for CENCO-ECC's electoral monitoring and education programs in preparation for the December 2023 elections. The Embassy has helped CENCO-ECC to engage with the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) President Mr. Denis Kadima and talks should continue. In addition, CENCO-ECC has consolidated a renewed partnership with the Carter Center and has other promising sources of funding for its electoral programs. We are encouraged by these developments.

Yet CENCO-ECC has stressed that significant challenges remain regarding the election next year. CENI must respect the recently released electoral calendar, commit to releasing electoral results from each polling booth, and approve CENCO-ECC and other electoral monitoring teams. CENI must still increase transparency in its work by ensuring regular working sessions with CENCO-ECC to review progress and resolve problems. Furthermore, with CENCO-ECC approving CENI's recent decision to open elections to the Congolese diaspora, CENCO-ECC also wishes to obtain approval from CENI to extend electoral monitoring to this diaspora community.

We echo CENCO-ECC's gratitude for your work to end the violence in Eastern DRC, especially your visit to the region and your recently reported telephone conversation with the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame. After over 25 years of conflict and suffering, it is crucial to end all outside interventions into Eastern DRC and help communities within the DRC to resolve their differences and build sustainable peace. Such peace in Eastern DRC is critical to allowing the country to institutionalize and regulate the exploitation of its vast natural resources for the benefit of all Congolese.

2023 will be vitally important for the DRC. Pope Francis has announced his planned visit to that country early in the new year. We urge you to engage with the Church and the Holy See in their promotion of peace and free and fair elections. The elections in 2018 ended with a handover to a new government but not one based on a legitimate, free, and fair election. Next year's election must respect the democratic process and the will of the Congolese people.

With gratitude for your collaboration with the Church in the DRC, I urge you to continue to build your strategic partnership with CENCO-ECC to inaugurate a new era of democratic rule and peace in the DRC. We wish to be of assistance to you as we support the local Church in these efforts.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ David J. Malloy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace