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Democratic Republic of Congo: Human Rights activists need your support

Human rights activists in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are doing something exceptional every day – they are working against all odds. Please support them by showing your solidarity. It is as simple as sending a card or letter.

BVES provides food and shelter for children, and a program of counselling to help them recover from the trauma of their experiences.

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“Sometimes with the difficulties we face, we question whether we should carry on. But when we receive your encouragement, it gives us heart again.”

Human rights activist, Butembo

Years of conflict have taken their toll on people’s lives and human rights in the DRC, but activists across the DRC are trying to make positive changes. They are investigating and denouncing human rights abuses, protecting former child soldiers, providing medical and social care for survivors of rape and torture, visiting detention centres, and preparing prosecutions against the perpetrators of abuses. They are playing a key role in peace-building.

Their work is dangerous. They have few resources. They work in the context of violence and corruption. Many have been the targets of death threats and illegal detentions. Some have been tortured or killed. The government of the DRC has offered them little support or protection.

The efforts of human rights activists deserve greater recognition internationally and from the DRC authorities. An international show of solidarity would offer much needed encouragement and a first line of protection for activists at risk, as well as for the victims they care for.

Please send cards and letters of support to Congolese human rights activists and the people they are helping. Two defenders of human rights are:

Marie-Dolorose Masika Kafanya of FEPSI.

FEPSI provides health and social care to women, child survivors of rape, widows, orphans of HIV/AIDS victims, and people displaced by conflict.

Find out more about FEPSI [\[link to next page\]](#)

Watch a video about FEPSI [\[link to video\]](#)

Marie-Dolorose Masika Kafanya
FEPSI/Plateforme des femmes de Butembo

c/o Mrs S Muhasa Lirima
Jeliza
PO Box 2800
Kampala/Uganda

Murhabazi Namegabe of BVES.

BVES protects marginalized children and promotes children's rights. It maintains a centre for former child soldiers, supporting them until reunited with their families.

Find out more about BVES ([link to next page](#))
Watch a video about BVES ([link to video](#))

Murhabazi Namegabe
BVES
c/o Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers
Plot 68-70 Kira Road
P. O. Box 12018
Kampala, Uganda

(Letters to be directed to Uganda because of lack of a reliable post service inside the DRC.)

Murhabazi Namegabe of BVES speaking to AI researcher.

BVES

Murhabazi Namegabe is Director of the Bureau pour le Volontariat au service de l'Enfance et de la Santé (BVES), an NGO that protects marginalized children and promotes children's rights.

Among other activities, BVES maintains a centre for former child soldiers in the city of Bukavu, offering them support until they are able to be reunited with their families. In the last year, the centre has cared for more than 370 former child soldiers, including around 60 girl soldiers.

BVES provides food and shelter for the children, and a program of counselling to help them recover from the trauma of their experiences. It organizes their education and finds apprenticeships for the older children (the cost of an apprenticeship is around \$20, but BVES receives little organized financial support). Thanks to BVES, some children who passed through the centre have since achieved university degrees.

Through the efforts of BVES and partner organizations, the overwhelming majority of children are successfully reintegrated with their families.

Please write cards or letters of encouragement to BVES and the children at the centre. Write to:

Murhabazi Namegabe
BVES
c/o Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers
Plot 68-70 Kira Road
P. O. Box 12018
Kampala, Uganda

FEPSI

Marie-Dolorose Masika Kafanya president of FEPSI

Marie-Dolorose Masika Kafanya is president of Femmes Engagées pour la Promotion de la Santé Intégrale (FEPSI), a women-run independent medical centre. It opened in 2003 and is based in the town of Butembo in the North-Kivu province of eastern DRC.

The centre is devoted to the health and social care of women and child survivors of rape, widows and orphans of HIV/AIDS victims and to people displaced by conflict.

More than 700 people, including around 300 rape survivors, have so far been treated at FEPSI's medical centre. There is no reliable water or electricity supply in the town. "The centre has 12 beds," says Marie-Dolorose, "when we really need around 50 to meet the need." Despite these pressures, FEPSI does not charge for the services it provides.

FEPSI is a member of a close and proactive Women's Platform. This is a network of human rights organizations in Butembo that supports rape survivors by providing judicial assistance, family counselling, and vocational training. It runs public-awareness campaigns on women's rights and against sexual violence.

Please write cards or letters of support to the Butembo women's NGOs:

Marie-Dolorose Masika Kafanya
FEPSI/Plateforme des femmes de Butembo
c/o Mrs S Muhasa Lirima
Jeliza
PO Box 2800
Kampala/Uganda

If you would like to do more, please show your solidarity for Congolese human rights defenders to the DRC government. Write to President Joseph Kabila and Marie-Madeleine Kalala, Minister for Human Rights

Son Excellence Joseph Kabila
President of the Republic
Cabinet du Président de la République
Palais de la Nation
Kinshasa/Gombe
République Démocratique du Congo

Marie-Madeleine KALALA
Ministre des Droits humains
Ministère des Droits humains
33/C Boulevard du 30 juin
Kinshasa-Gombe
République Démocratique du Congo

Ask them to:

- Publicly acknowledge the vital role being played by Congolese human rights organizations in helping the Congolese people recover from years of conflict;
- Meet and consult with Congolese human rights NGOs regularly;
- Act to protect human rights defenders by:
 - instructing all local administrative, police and military authorities to guarantee the right of human rights activists to work free from interference and fear;
 - promptly investigating reports of threats, illegal detentions and other abuses against human rights defenders, and bringing the perpetrators to justice.