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Democratic Republic of Congo: More prosecutions should follow for war crimes in the Kivus

Amnesty International welcomes the arrest by the German authorities of Ignace Murwanashyaka, President of the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR), and his deputy, Straton Musoni, on 17 November 2009 as an important step forward in addressing impunity and establishing accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in eastern DRC.

“The FDLR has been responsible for innumerable killings of civilians, rape, abductions of women and girls for sexual slavery, recruitment of children, destruction of villages and other human rights abuses in the eastern provinces of the DRC. These crimes have been amply documented by Amnesty International and other organizations.”

“These are the first arrests of senior leaders of armed groups or forces on charges relating to war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the Kivu provinces of eastern DRC,” the organization said. “After more than 15 years of repeated violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in the Kivus, this a shameful record on the part of the international community and of regional states in particular”.

Pointing to the obligation of all states to prosecute or extradite persons allegedly responsible for crimes under international law, Amnesty International called on other states, including the DRC and Rwanda, to mount investigations, arrests and prosecutions against other suspected war criminals in eastern DRC or to extradite them to countries where fair trial rights can be guaranteed.

“It is not acceptable that the DRC government resists calls for the arrest of Bosco Ntaganda, for whom an arrest warrant has been issued by the International Criminal Court. We urge the DRC government to arrest Bosco Ntaganda immediately and transfer him to the ICC, as they are required to do under international law.”

“Rwanda and the DRC must also urgently clarify what judicial action they will take against former armed group leader Laurent Nkunda, who has been held by the Rwandan authorities since January 2009, and of Jules Mutebutsi, present in Rwanda since 2004, despite credible accusations that both men were responsible for war crimes in eastern DRC.”

“The DRC government must also remove all suspected perpetrators of war crimes and other serious human rights violations from the ranks of its army. Some of these individuals are believed to be involved in the ongoing Kimia 2 army offensive against the FDLR in the two Kivu provinces – an operation that is supported by the UN”.