



Republic of Rwanda
Rwandan High Commission
London

Johnson Busingye
High Commissioner of Rwanda
120-122 Seymour Pl, London W1H 1NR
London, United Kingdom
05 April 2025

Rt Hon Emily Thornberry, MP
Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London, United Kingdom

Subject: Response to your letter dated 26 March 2025

Dear Rt. Hon. Emily Thornberry,

I am writing on behalf of the Government of Rwanda in response to your letter dated 26 March 2025, referencing the testimonies presented to the Foreign Affairs Committee by Mr. Richard Moncrieff and Ms. Michela Wrong on 17 March 2025 regarding the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

We reviewed the hearing. The two witnesses grossly misrepresented the situation in eastern DRC, while overlooking Rwanda's legitimate security concerns and other key drivers of the conflict. I will address several inaccurate and misleading claims made during that session.

Allow me to give you some background. The M23 is a Congolese movement with its own grievances, fighting for the rights of their community. It is the fourth iteration of similar groups that have taken up arms in the DRC, in the last three decades. These movements arose as a result of the longstanding, systematic persecution of the Congolese Tutsi population in the DRC, which dates back to colonial times, as well as widely reported governance failures and endemic corruption that characterize the Government of the DRC.

The persecution of the Congolese Tutsi communities was worsened by the arrival of Rwandan Hutu extremists who fled into eastern DRC after committing the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. Rather than disarm and relocate the armed genocide perpetrators away from the border, as per international law, the DRC Government re-armed and re-organized



them. Their objective has always been that of overthrowing the Government of Rwanda and completing the genocide.

Some of these individuals have since found safe haven beyond the DRC, including in Europe and the UK. To this day, five genocide suspects reside in the UK. None of them has been prosecuted in the UK despite the UK courts finding that a *prima facie* case exists, according to the evidence on the record. The Committee might like to know that the struggle to have these suspects stand trial is almost two decades.

Since 1994, across the border in the DRC, illegal armed groups mushroomed using as a blueprint the anti-Tutsi extremist ideology of Rwandan genocidaires. Today, there are more than 200 such groups - chief among them is the FDLR genocidal militia.

It is in this context of decades of instability and persecution that hundreds of thousands of Congolese Tutsi took refuge in countries around the region. Rwanda alone is host to over 100,000 Congolese refugees, more than 80,000 of whom have held that status since 1996. Thousands more live in countries beyond our region, in Europe, the UK, Canada and the United States.

The ongoing conflict in eastern DRC should be understood in the context of systemic exclusion and targeted violence against Congolese Tutsi communities.

The accusations of “*occupation by Rwanda*”, are simply false. Rwanda has no territorial claims or ambitions in the DRC. Rwanda’s concern is the existential threat we face from the territory of the DRC, which the DRC is aware of and never neutralises. The M23 is a Congolese movement fighting for their rights; the jury is out on how they can be accused of “*occupying*” a region to which they are native, and a country to which they are nationals.

Given the serious security threats that Rwanda experiences from the DRC, it has always been imperative to reinforce defensive measures in our border areas with the DRC, proportional to the security threat posed, to protect our sovereignty and territorial integrity and the safety of our population. Not to do so would be irresponsible.

Successive DRC governments have made the policy choice to support or ally itself with the FDLR and similar groups to destabilize Rwanda. The FDLR is



the most neglected security threat in the region. Together with its coalition of local armed groups, it continues to commit atrocities against Congolese people, including mass killings, rapes, looting, smuggling and drug trafficking. The FDLR has also targeted foreign nationals. In February 1999, FDLR fighters murdered two American tourists in Virunga National Park, and in 2021, they were implicated in the killing of Italian Ambassador Luca Attanasio in eastern DRC. These are widely reported.

Over the last thirty years, the FDLR in complicity with the Congolese Army (FARDC) and other groups, have repeatedly violated Rwanda's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Since 2018, Rwanda's territory has been violated more than 20 times. These include the October 2019 attacks in Rwanda's Northern province which resulted in 14 casualties; the June 2022 rocket attacks aimed at thwarting the CHOGM in Kigali; repeated incursions by DRC fighter jets into Rwandan airspace in November and December 2022, as well as January 2023. More recently, on 26 January 2025, retreating FARDC/FDLR forces fired into Rwandan territory leaving 16 dead and 177 injured.

The only useful testimony about FDLR should be that it still exists because it is enabled to exist by its host, the DRC Government. As long as it exists, it will always get enabled to recruit and rearm, to advance its genocidal agenda. Its target will always be Rwanda. Therefore, peace will continue to elude our region.

The Committee will probably recall that in 1994, after the genocide, the same composition of people ran into Tanzania, across the Eastern border. Unlike DRC's red-carpet reception, Tanzania disarmed them, settled them over 50 km from our border, effectively governed the camps, allowed the International Criminal Court to investigate whoever they had suspicions on and worked with Rwanda, UNHCR and others to return them to Rwanda when peace and stability were restored. Rwanda's border with Tanzania continues to be among the most peaceful in the continent.

The continued preservation and existence of the FDLR is neither accidental nor inevitable. Until FDLR ceases to exist its existence will always concern Rwanda, and should concern the Committee.

The so-called evidence presented to the Committee that Rwanda provides military support to M23 is equally false. Information has been openly available



that M23's arms and equipment have always come from the Congolese army itself, often abandoned during retreats or defeats, such as after the capture of Goma.

On the claims that Rwanda's mineral exports come from the DRC, it should be clear that Rwanda and the DRC sit on the same mineral-rich geological rock, the Kibaran belt. The minerals found in our region do not stop at our geographical borders.

In addition to key infrastructure including a good road network, an airline and access to finance institutions, Rwanda has made significant investments in mineral value addition, including refineries for gold, tin, and tantalum. Mining is a strategic business that can drive Rwanda's long-term development goals and supply other countries with critical minerals needed for strategic sovereignty. Your witnesses should have told the committee, for example, that the 4th largest Tungsten mine, in the world, is in Rwanda and DRC is not in the 1st three.

Mineral traceability is top priority for Rwanda. We are working to attract world-class investment by applying industry-standard practices in transparency and ethics. We adhere to international transparency mechanisms such as the ITSCI and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Mineral Certification Mechanism, which ensures that minerals exported from Rwanda are conflict-free.

Rwanda stands to gain more from a stable and prosperous DRC and other countries in our region, with whom we can collaborate in the mineral trade and localized value addition. Reducing the current crisis to a fight over minerals is a distraction from the root causes of insecurity and conflict.

We were asked to respond to allegations that, in the past, M23 got involved in concerning human rights violations. Rwanda is neither a spokesperson nor a representative of M23.

Rwanda has consistently demonstrated its commitment to regional security through diplomatic engagements, cooperation with international partners, and active participation in peace efforts. Rwanda's interests are best served with a peaceful and integrated neighbourhood. We want an end to this conflict through a negotiated political solution and long-term security guarantees at



Republic of Rwanda
Rwandan High Commission
London

our borders. This will enable us to go back to the urgent business of developing our country and our region.

We therefore urge the Committee to critically assess all the information and ensure that future discussions reflect a balanced and nuanced understanding of the situation on the ground.

Rwanda appreciates the Committee's important role in addressing foreign affairs matters, trusts that these clarifications will receive due consideration and stands ready to engage further.

Yours sincerely,

Johnston Busingye,
High Commissioner of the Republic of Rwanda to the United Kingdom



**Foreign Affairs
Committee**



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

26 March 2025

His Excellency, Johnston Busingye
High Commissioner of Rwanda to the United Kingdom

Your Excellency

On 17 March, the Foreign Affairs Committee at the House of Commons, UK Parliament, held a public evidence hearing to examine the developing situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).¹ The evidence given during this session left the Committee with questions, and we would value the chance to hear from Rwanda about some of these developments.

1. In 2024, the UN Group of Experts on the DRC said the Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF) had "de facto control and direction over M23 operations" which "renders Rwanda liable for the actions of M23".² The UN Group of Experts estimate there were between 3,000 to 4,000 RDF troops deployed in the eastern DRC at the time of drafting their report (2023/24) and said the "M23 and RDF military build-up and superior combat strength enabled them to rapidly expand the areas under their control".³ On 30 January, the UK Foreign Secretary condemned the occupation of Goma and other territories in eastern DRC by the M23 and RDF as an "unacceptable breach of DRC's sovereignty and the UN Charter which poses a fundamental risk to regional stability."⁴ What is your response to these statements?
2. We were told that the RDF is active in the eastern DRC. What is your response to this?
3. The Committee heard evidence that Rwanda provides military support to the M23. What is your response to this?
4. The UN Group of Experts on the DRC reported a significant increase in coltan exports from Rwanda, up by 50% in 2023 compared to 2022.⁵ What is the source

¹ <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/9003/the-situation-in-the-eastern-drc/>

² <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/118/80/pdf/n2411880.pdf>

³ <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/118/80/pdf/n2411880.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/situation-in-eastern-drc-uk-statement>

⁵ <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/118/80/pdf/n2411880.pdf>



**Foreign Affairs
Committee**

HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

location of these minerals? Can you explain the reasons behind the significant increase?

5. Reports by the UN Group of Experts on the DRC have, in the past, reported that the M23 are involved in deeply concerning human rights violations, including executions of civilians and arbitrary detentions.⁶ There are also alarming reports of sexual and gender-based violence being committed by numerous parties involved in the conflict in the eastern DRC, including the M23.⁷ What is your response to these reports?

These reports are concerning, and, as the situation continues to develop, I would greatly appreciate your quick response before the House of Parliament rises on 8 April for Easter recess. I will be placing this letter and your response in the public domain.

*Many thanks
L.S. Thornberry*

**Dame Emily Thornberry MP
Chair, Foreign Affairs Committee**

*P.S We would very much appreciate
a quick response if possible.
It is so important that we hear
both sides*

⁶ <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/118/80/pdf/n2411880.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2024/04/drc-insecurity-alarming-levels-turk-reports>