

Urgent: Senators Durbin, Van Hollen, and Kaine Ask Secretary Blinken and Yellen for updates on Sanctions for M23

On October 20th, 2022, Senator Richard Durbin, Senator Chris Van Hollen, and Senator Tim Kaine came together to write a letter to both Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen about the M23 rebel group. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been terrorized by the M23 rebel group since late 2021. M23 has launched sophisticated and deadly attacks against the Congolese government, the U.N. Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and civilians. The letter written by Senators Durbin, Van Hollen, and Kaine ask for an update on the ongoing enforcement of U.S. sanctions against M23 as required by Public Law 112-239. Congress included a requirement in the Fiscal Year 2013 National Defense Authorization Act imposing sanctions on those that provide material and financial support to M23, and this remains in force. According to the United Nations, Rwanda has continuously been supplying the M23 rebels with logistical and military support.

Rwanda backing M23 rebels in DRC: UN experts

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/4/rwanda-backing-m23-rebels-in-drc-un-experts>

Sincerely,
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 20, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Janet Yellen
Secretary of the Treasury
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Secretary Blinken and Secretary Yellen:

We write with growing concern about activities of the rebel group known as M23 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since late 2021, M23 has launched increasingly sophisticated and deadly attacks against the Congolese government, the U.N. Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and civilians. Credible reports by established human rights organizations indicate that M23 has a regular supply of modern arms and munitions that allows its members to regularly strike targets over long distances and execute precision fires against aircraft, suggesting direct state sponsored support. Given the years and degree of human suffering in eastern Congo we ask for an update on ongoing enforcement of U.S. sanctions against M23 as required by Public Law 112-239.

Since the beginning of this year, more than 700,000 people have been forced to flee their homes, with many civilian deaths. Human rights groups have tracked cases of torture, rape, and imprisoned civilians forcibly made to engage in cannibalism with their murdered fellow prisoners. These horrific reports come as M23 displays offensive capabilities more in line with a conventional army than a disorganized insurgent group. Their capabilities have enabled them to overrun MONUSCO-supported Congolese-held positions and hold territory. In fact, the head of the MONUSCO force has warned that it “may find itself confronted to a threat that goes beyond its current capabilities.”

Considering the grave threat to regional security and confirmed human rights abuses, we believe the United States must continue to hold those supporting such horrific acts accountable. Congress included a requirement in the Fiscal Year 2013 National Defense Authorization Act nearly a decade ago imposing sanctions on those that provide material and financial support to M23. This remains in force, and we respectfully request an update on persons and officials of foreign governments your departments believe to be providing

support to M23, which can be by classified annex if needed. We also request you detail your current efforts to further identify and sanction persons and officials engaged in supporting M23.

We thank you for your consideration of our request and urge swift action to confront this crisis.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Africa and
Global Health Policy

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