

**DR Congo: Rwanda Should Stop Aiding War Crimes Suspect  
By The Genocide Watch  
4 June 2012**



Congolese civilians flee from Rutshuru territory, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, across the Ugandan border at Bunagana following fighting between the Congolese army and mutineers. May 2012.

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(Goma) – Rwandan military officials have been arming and supporting the mutiny in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) of Gen. Bosco Ntaganda, who is wanted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court (ICC), Human Rights Watch said today.

Rwandan military officials have allowed Ntaganda to enter Rwanda and supplied him with new recruits, weapons, and ammunition. Ntaganda is sought on an ICC arrest warrant for recruiting and using child soldiers.

“The role played by some Rwandan military officials in supporting and harboring an ICC war crimes suspect can’t just be swept under the rug,” said Anneke Van Woudenberg, senior Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch. “The Rwandan government should immediately stop all support to Ntaganda and assist in his arrest.”

Field research conducted by Human Rights Watch in the region in May 2012 revealed that Rwandan army officials have provided weapons, ammunition, and an estimated 200 to 300 recruits to support Ntaganda’s mutiny in Rutshuru territory, eastern Congo. The recruits include civilians forcibly recruited in Musanze and Rubavu districts in Rwanda, some of whom were children under 18. Witnesses said that some recruits were summarily executed on the orders of Ntaganda’s forces when they tried to escape.

One Rwandan, forcibly recruited into Ntaganda’s forces and who later escaped, told Human Rights Watch, “I saw six people who were killed because they tried to flee. They were shot dead, and I was ordered to bury their bodies.”

Witnesses told Human Rights Watch that weapons provided to Ntaganda’s forces by Rwandan military officials included Kalashnikov assault rifles, grenades, machine guns, and anti-aircraft artillery. New recruits brought these weapons to Runyoni in eastern Congo, the main base of the mutiny.

The recruits, weapons, and ammunition coming from Rwanda have provided important support to Ntaganda and his forces, Human Rights Watch said. The support has helped them hold their military positions on the hills of Runyoni, Tshanzu, and Mbuzi, and surrounding villages, against military assaults from the Congolese army (see map).

Providing weapons and ammunition to Ntaganda's mutiny contravenes the United Nations Security Council arms embargo on Congo, which stipulates that all states shall "take the necessary measures to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer, from their territories or by their nationals [...] of arms and any related materiel, and the provision of any assistance, advice or training related to military activities [...] to all non-governmental entities and individuals operating in the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo."

Rwandan officials also permitted Ntaganda and members of his forces to enter Rwanda on a number of recent occasions to evade capture, to elude attacks by Congolese armed forces, or to seek military support for their mutiny. On May 26, witnesses saw Ntaganda in Kinigi, Rwanda, meeting with a Rwandan military officer at Bushokoro bar. Kinigi is Ntaganda's home town and he retains family connections there. Human Rights Watch found no evidence that Rwandan officials tried to arrest Ntaganda while he was in Rwanda.

When contacted for comment, the spokesperson for the Rwanda Defence Force referred Human Rights Watch to a May 28 public statement by the Rwandan foreign minister that denied any involvement in eastern Congo.

"Permitting Ntaganda to move in and out of Rwanda without fear of arrest sends a message that Rwanda is not serious about helping deliver justice to victims of the war crimes he and his troops have committed," Van Woudenberg said. "Rwanda's allies should insist that Rwanda help end impunity in the region, not encourage it."

In addition to being sought on an ICC arrest warrant, Ntaganda is on a United Nations Security Council sanctions list, barring him from any travel outside Congo. Under the UN sanctions, Rwanda – like other countries – is obligated to "take the necessary measures to prevent the entry into or transit through their territories of all persons" on the sanctions list.

Ntaganda, a powerful general in the Congolese army, began his mutiny in eastern Congo at the end of March, following government attempts to weaken his control and increased calls for his arrest for alleged war crimes. He was joined by an estimated 300 to 600 troops in Masisi territory, North Kivu province, and at least 149 children and young men recruited by force around Kilolirwe. Ntaganda's forces were defeated and pushed out of Masisi by the Congolese army in early May.

On May 3, another Congolese army officer, Col. Sultani Makenga, began a separate mutiny in eastern Congo. Makenga had previously served with Ntaganda in the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP), a former Rwandan-backed rebel group responsible for numerous atrocities against civilians in Congo. A spokesman for Makenga said in a news release on May 6 and in an interview with Human Rights Watch that Makenga was not with Ntaganda, and that his mutiny – known as M23 in reference to the March 23, 2009 peace agreement between the CNDP and the Congolese government – was intended to highlight the grievances of the Tutsi ethnic group and conditions in the Congolese army.

But mutineers who have escaped or defected told Human Rights Watch that the two mutinies are not separate, and that Ntaganda and Makenga operate together from the Runyoni area. These witnesses told Human Rights Watch that Ntaganda remained in overall command of the forces.

Ntaganda has publicly denied being in Runyoni. On May 29, he told the BBC's Kinyarwanda radio service that he was in Masisi territory, and denied fighting alongside Makenga's M23 forces. His claims are contradicted by numerous witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch who saw him in the Runyoni area in May.

The United Nations peacekeeping mission in Congo, MONUSCO, has also gathered information about recruitment for Ntaganda's forces in Rwanda. On May 28, the BBC reported on a leaked UN internal report saying that 11 Rwandan citizens, one of them a child, had gone to a UN base, saying they had been recruited under false pretenses in Rwanda to join Ntaganda's forces.

The Rwandan government has denied providing support to Ntaganda's forces. In a public statement on May 28, in response to the BBC report, the Rwandan foreign minister, Louise Mushikiwabo, said the reports were "categorically false and dangerous." In a statement on May 31, Mushikiwabo accused MONUSCO of "spreading false rumours aimed at aggravating the volatile situation in Eastern DRC," and further asserted, "The irresponsible words of lobbies like Human Rights Watch are no less dangerous than bullets or machetes."

"Arming Ntaganda enables further grave abuses by a man already wanted for war crimes," Van Woudenberg said. "The Rwandan government should investigate the serious allegations of support for Ntaganda by its military officials and help the Congolese government arrest and transfer him to the ICC."

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