

EDWARD R. ROYCE, CALIFORNIA
CHAIRMAN

AMY PORTER
CHIEF OF STAFF

THOMAS SHEEHY
STAFF DIRECTOR



ELIOT L. ENGEL, NEW YORK
RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER

JASON STEINBAUM
DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

One Hundred Fifteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

August 2, 2017

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson,

I write to express my concern over the ever escalating violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Many of the atrocities that are now routinely reported, including dozens of mass graves, stem from the failure of President Kabila to abide by the country's constitution and leave office. I urge you to increase U.S. engagement aimed at helping to bring this political crisis, and the resulting violence, to an end.

Both the U.S. House and Senate passed resolutions last fall calling for a democratic transition of power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that respects the country's constitution—which prohibits President Kabila from running for a third term. Both chambers stand in full agreement that President Kabila must cede power and allow for free and fair elections. As these resolutions recognize, the United States has deep interests in the stability of the country due to its size, central location within Africa, and diverse economy. That is one of the reasons successive Administrations have supported a large U.N. peacekeeping operation there. Violence and unrest has the potential to spill into neighboring countries and destabilize the region.

As you know, President Kabila's second term expired on December 19th. A political agreement negotiated in the final days of 2017 has now failed due to his refusal to leave office. As a result, the Catholic Bishops withdrew from their critical mediation role, citing lack of political will to follow through on the terms of the agreement.

At the same time, violence between armed groups and government backed forces has escalated in the Kasai region as well as in South and North Kivu. Government forces routinely perpetrate violence and human rights violations against the Congolese people with impunity. The United Nations has confirmed the existence of dozens of mass graves with many more likely to be

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
August 2, 2017
Page 2

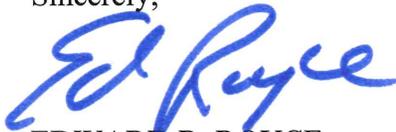
discovered. Efforts to bring those responsible to justice have been met with more violence, including the brutal murder of American and Swedish investigators, Zaida Catalan and Michael Sharp.

I appreciate Ambassador Haley's outspoken criticism at the United Nations of President Kabila's failure to honor the country's constitution, as well as her efforts to call attention to the human rights abuses occurring in the country. I commend the Treasury Department's designation of a senior Congolese security official for targeted financial sanctions. However, stronger U.S. engagement is warranted. I urge you to join Ambassador Haley in forcefully condemning President Kabila's failure to step down and work with the Treasury Department to target the finances of additional Congolese officials who are standing in the way of the elections that are mandated by the country's constitution.

Finally, I respectfully ask that you encourage the White House to nominate a new U.S. Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While I have confidence in the abilities of those currently acting in leadership roles at the U.S. Embassy in Kinshasa, a presidentially-nominated, Senate confirmed U.S. Ambassador will have the unquestionable authority to make clear to President Kabila that the United States finds his refusal to hold elections and leave office unacceptable. They would also be helpful in making elections viable. The Congolese people have too long suffered from self-serving leaders.

I appreciate your attention to this important issue, and I look forward to continue to work with you to advance U.S. interests in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and across Africa.

Sincerely,



EDWARD R. ROYCE
Chairman