



# Pat-MedMUNC III

## UNHRC

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### *Refugee Management in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*

From the time of its colonization by Belgium, led by Sir Henry Morton Stanley, the native residents of the Democratic Republic of Congo have been subjected to mass exploitation, oppression and murder. After having regained independence in 1960, within weeks, the newly formed, fragile government led by President Joseph Kasavubu and Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba faced secessionist revolts and an army mutiny over low salaries. Katanga, a province, declared independence under Moïse Tshombe, who was allegedly backed by the Belgium government and mining companies like Union Minière, the company that provided uranium for the American atomic bomb, uranium that was mined in the Katanga province. Seeking Soviet military aid to counter Tshombe, Lumumba antagonized Kasavubu as well as the United States government.

Taking advantage of this conflict, General Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, who had been ordered by both Kasavubu and Lumumba to arrest the other, mutinied. Allegedly receiving financial and technical assistance from agencies like the American Central Intelligence Agency, Mobutu could afford to privately pay his soldiers and took control.

Patrice Lumumba was arrested and executed by Katanga forces with reports that the Belgium government ordered the execution and Belgium paratroopers even supervised it. In 1965, Mobutu overthrew Kasavubu in a bloodless coup and began his 32 year reign as head of state. He renamed the country Zaire and renamed himself Mobutu Sese Seko or the Great Unstoppable Warrior who goes from Victory to Victory. Receiving support from the United States govt. for his fierce anti-Communist stance and his welcoming of foreign businesses to exploit Congo's many mineral resources, Mobutu visited the United States on several occasions, meeting Presidents Nixon, Reagan and Bush. In this time, corruption and siphoning of the funds became so prevalent that the term 'Le Mal Zairois' or the Zaire sickness was coined. Mobutu's party, the Popular Movement of the Revolution, became the only legitimate political party. In 1966, four cabinet members opposed to his dictatorial power were publicly executed and he assumed total power. Mobutu explained the

execution as follows: "One had to strike through a spectacular example, and create the conditions of regime discipline. When a chief takes a decision, he decides - period." Mobutu's personal bank account reportedly held as much as the entire country's national debt- he simply printed bank notes when he needed some, leading to rampant inflation. Food stocks plummeted, hospitals shut down and many public servants just fled their jobs- driving the population into starvation.

In 1994, conflict broke out in neighboring Rwanda with the Hutu militia forces or the Interahamwe being driven into the DRC following the ascension of a Tutsi government. Fearing reprisals from the Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front, over 2 million Hutu refugees crossed over in Congo during this same period.

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1997, Kabila's troops captured Kinshasa, the capital, and Kabila appointed himself President, renaming the country the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mobutu fled the country and died soon after, in exile in Morocco. This ended the first Congo War.

In just over a year, the Second Congo War broke out as Kabila became discontent with the increasing Rwandan influence in the country and asked all Rwandan and Ugandan military forces to leave the country. The Congolese Tutsis revolted in the town of Goma and under the pretext of preventing genocide again against the Tutsis, the Rwandans created the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), a well-armed rebel group. The Ugandan government, to counter the growing Rwandan influence, created the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC). To counter these militias, President Kabila offered support to his previous enemies, the Hutu militia groups in eastern Congo and a large scale conflict broke out. Kabila also appealed to fellow members of the Southern Africa Development Community and troops from Namibia, Angola and Zimbabwe came to Kabila's rescue with troops from Chad, Libya and Sudan following. Reports suggest the intervention was revenge for Uganda's support of rebel groups in their countries. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 2006, the first multi-party elections were held which were won by Joseph Kabila, an election praised by neutral observers as fair and unbiased.

However, conflicts have broken out again in provinces like Kivu, Katanga and Ituri. In Katanga, North Kivu and South Kivu, Mai Mai militias, armed by the older Kabila, have slipped out of the control of Kinshasa and threaten the fragile peace. In Ituri, ethnic conflict between agriculturalist Lendu tribes and pastoralist Hema groups has led to clashes in the province.

In May, 2009, the remnants of the FDLR militants led attacks on various villages in South Kivu

and a stable peace has still not been achieved in Eastern Congo. Also, reports allege that the Rwandan government's cooperation with the Congolese government in the 'pursuit of war criminals' is just a pretext to allow their soldiers access to mineral rich eastern Congo provinces. Once the threat of the FDLR is removed, it remains to be seen if Rwanda will peacefully withdraw its troops from the area or if further conflict will ensue.

Attacks on civilians and camps for IDPs, as well as a lack of progress in the disarmament of militias, are hindering the return of stability to many regions of the country. Van Woudenburg of Human Rights Watch reports, "The focus is on bringing this country to elections, but there's almost no interest in the impunity and human right abuses that continue today. The truth is, Congo isn't magically going to become a democracy. It's going to take years of hard work." This Committee's purpose should be to solve the issue of refugee management from this ensuing conflict.

### *Points to Consider*

- Your nation's history with the DRC.
- Past experiences with refugee management.
- How to safely protect the refugees.