

No International Justice for Congo. UN Coverup of War Crimes

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Human rights activists around the world have called for international justice and an end to impunity in the wake of the UN Mapping Report on Human Rights Abuse in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The report, which covers the period from 1993 to 2003, was released on October 1st, by the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights. [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay says](#) that, though it covers a time period ending in 2003, these crimes continue because the perpetrators have never been prosecuted.

Defense lawyers for the [International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda](#) say, however, that there is no reason to expect justice from an international criminal tribunal.

The UN report suggests a mode of transitional justice in Congolese courts, but much of the international community has reacted skeptically, because the Congolese judicial system is barely functioning. A coalition of Africa advocates, including Friends of the Congo, Africa Faith and Justice Network, and many others, also say that justice is not possible in Congo because Rwanda and Uganda are occupying eastern Congo, and plundering its natural resource wealth, with Congolese President Joseph Kabila's collaboration. They will [focus instead on pressuring President Barack Obama](#) to end the U.S.A.'s longstanding military and diplomatic support for Rwandan President Paul Kagame, whose army is most controversially implicated in the report, in war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide against Rwandan Hutu refugees and Congolese Hutus in Congo.

Ugandan [President Yoweri Museveni](#) and his army are implicated in the same crimes, and both reacted angrily to the report. This week Kagame, also said, at the swearing-in ceremony for his Cabinet ministers, that he will not respond to foreign donors pressuring him to create political space for the opposition in Rwanda.

On Saturday morning, October 9th, [Victoire Ingabire Umuhoya](#), leader of the [FDU-Inkingi](#), Rwanda's broadbased opposition coalition of parties, confirmed that the security operatives always outside her home have been replaced by police with firearms, a least six of whom were visible from inside. She also said that expanding the mandate of the International Criminal

Tribunal on Rwanda, to include the crimes of the Rwandan army and others in Congo, was the best hope for international justice.

But International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda defense lawyers [Christopher Black](#) and [Peter](#)

[Erlinder](#) say that the power of the U.S., the UK and their allies so distorts international justice tribunals that international justice is not possible.

ICTR defense lawyer Christopher Black, who recently published, "[The Rwandan Patriotic Front's Bloody Record and the History of UN Cover-Ups](#)," in Monthly Review Zine, says that the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda will never charge officers of Kagame's army because, if charged, they will implicate their U.S. and European allies:

"They're never going to charge the RPF, because it would be too dangerous. If you start charging the RPF, RPF officers, to save their necks, are going to start talking about others. And then you're going to get up to the Americans and the British and the Canadians and the Belgians. The whole thing would fall apart. They don't dare do that."

Peter Erlinder says that the U.S. controls the decisions of the Security Council, and/or ignores them, as it did, with impunity in Iraq, and that it will therefore control any attempt to expand the mandate of the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda.

"If the United States wants something to happen, in terms of punishing these criminals, there's a way to do it. If the U.S. doesn't want it to happen, it won't happen, tribunals or no. Because the United States controls the ICTR; because the United States controls the I.C.C.; because the United States controls the Security Council. So extending the mandate of the ICTR has no effect unless the policy of the United States changes to allow the prosecution of the RPF and Kagame for the crimes that are already known, that they've committed, and those crimes have been known for 15 years."

Erlinder agrees with the coalition now focused on Obama's response to the report. He says that the goal should be changing U.S. policy in East/Central Africa, which has been shaped by the determination to control geostrategic resources, most of all, those of resource rich Congo.

An excerpt of the UN Mapping Report on Human Rights Abuse in the Democratic Republic of Congo, 1993-2003, is available at [Monthly Review Zine](#), and the entire report is available on the [website of the UN High Commission on Human Rights](#).

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