



“Spying” accusations by DRC officials signal alarming escalation in public incitement

Kigali, 29 December 2022

Just days after the UN Group of Experts identified a troubling rise in ethnic violence and hate speech directed against Rwandans, Rwandophones, and the Congolese Tutsi community by DRC officials, military officers and civil society leaders, this week’s press briefing by DRC’s Deputy Interior Minister Jean-Claude Moliye Mandongo represents a truly alarming escalation in xenophobia and public incitement to violence.

Rwanda is deeply concerned about the fate of two Rwandan citizens, Dr Juvenal Nshimiyimana and Moses Mushabe, both staff of the African Health Development Organisation detained in Kinshasa since 30 August 2022, who were presented as “spies” to the media at the briefing held this past Tuesday, 27 December.

This parading of alleged “spies” is straight from a playbook that we recognise all too well. Leaders unable or unwilling to account for their own failures will seek to fuel ethnic divisions and point the finger at sinister outside forces. Nobody in the Great Lakes Region is under any illusion as to where this leads or how great the toll.

In an ominous reference to the Genocide in Rwanda, officials at Tuesday’s press briefing accused the Rwandan detainees of planning to shoot down a plane carrying the Congolese President and also alluded to further arrests of more people linked to AHDO – a deliberate attempt to further inflame Congolese public opinion.

We urge leaders in the DRC to deescalate the hateful rhetoric and turn back from the path they seem to be choosing. The international community, including those who insist on coddling the DRC leaders, should take note and hold DRC officials accountable for this escalation.

END

NOTE

- *Rwanda’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has formally protested the arbitrary arrest and detention of several Rwandan citizens in the DRC and requested their unconditional release.*
- *In two notes verbales of 4 November and 7 December 2022, Rwanda protested the arbitrary arrest and detention of Dr Juvenal Nshimiyimana and Moses Mushabe, both staff of the African Health Development Organisation, and called for their release.*
- *Mr. Mushabe is reported to be seriously ill and in need of medical attention.*
- *Dr. Juvenal Nshimiyimana has previously served as a country representative of UNAIDS in the DRC.*