

## **DR Congo: ILC Africa condemns the massacre of 46 indigenous people in Ituri**

**Nairobi, 19 January 2021**– The International Land Coalition in Africa condemns the killing of the indigenous Batwa/Pygmy people in the morning of 14 January, in the village of Masini, Ituri Province.

At least 46 men, women, children and the elderly are reported to have been massacred in the morning attack. The killings were claimed by ADF/NALU and other militia groups in the region. According to the sources on the ground—including survivors—approached by ILC members, the massacres were an attempt by the militia groups to control the area and its land, which is the ancestral territory of the Indigenous People of central Africa; Batwa, also known as ‘Pygmies’.

“Ethnic hatred can never be the answer to people’s social and political demands. The gruesome killings of these people and the desire to deprive them of their ancestral land is unacceptable; it is a violation of human rights,” said Audace Kubwimana, ILC Africa Regional Coordinator.

ILC Africa members in the DR Congo deplore the massacre, which comes on the back of a long history of violence and domination of the Indigenous peoples of central Africa. ILC Africa members in the DR Congo are also deeply concerned by recurring incidents of excessive use of force “in a situation that resembles an ethnic cleansing or even a genocide.” There have also been reports that the vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples is deliberately ignored. “Their diminishing number in the various areas where they live with other communities is of concern,” the members said.

ILC Africa rejects all acts of violence committed against indigenous people, noting that the Government of the DR Congo has an obligation not only to publicly condemn the massacre but to protect indigenous people against violent acts committed by militia groups. The government must set up an independent and participative group to investigate the massacre by ADF/NALU to prevent the Ituri Province from sliding into another cycle of violence.

ILC Africa admonishes the African Union to condemn the repetitive massacres of Batwa/Pygmies in the DR Congo, and demand that justice be rendered to those who protect the forests and its biodiversity, while the killers be brought to book.

Finally, ILC Africa encourages the international community to support initiatives at preserving human rights, such as the effort demonstrated by ILC Africa members’ initiative protecting land and environment defenders in mobilizing for the establishment of laws to protect human rights defenders. This has led, in the DR Congo, to the edict of 30 November 2019 protecting human rights defenders in the province of North Kivu.

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