

TRIAL OF A LEADER OF A COALITION OF ARMED GROUPS FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY OPENS IN THE DRC

Donat Kwenga Omari, former FARDC soldier, will be tried from October 25, 2024, by the Bukavu Garrison Military Court for crimes against humanity committed when he led a coalition of Raia Mutomboki armed groups known as the “Forces Populaires de Paix”. The trial aims to establish Donat's role in the crimes committed by this coalition and will enable over 350 victims to make their voices heard and gain access to justice.

Donat is accused, among other things, of crimes of rape, sexual slavery, murder, torture, deprivation of liberty, looting and destruction of property, committed in the territories of Shabunda and Kalehe, in South Kivu, in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) between 2016 and 2021.

A former major in the national army, Donat deserted to create his own armed group in 2012, then became the leader a coalition of Raia Mutomboki (RM) armed groups called “Forces Populaires de Paix”. In recent years, other RM leaders who gravitated around him have been sentenced by the Congolese justice system, including Kokodikoko in 2019, [Hamakombo](#) in 2020, and [Bralima](#) and [Ndarumanga](#) in 2023. This trial reflects the government's ongoing commitment to eradicating these armed groups and could represent a major step towards punishing militias that have been operating in South Kivu province for over ten years.

“Donat was the mastermind behind the coalition of a number of RM militias active in the province,” explains Daniele Perissi, head of TRIAL International's DRC Program, “we hope that this trial will establish the truth about the role he played in the commission of widespread crimes against more than 350 victims, including many minors.”

Raia Mutomboki militias, or “angry citizens” in Swahili, are local self-defense movements that have structured themselves into armed groups and operated in the province of South Kivu. These groups began to develop in 2011 in response to attacks on the population by the Rwandan militia FDLR (Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda), facilitated by a security vacuum. They then expanded and assumed control of certain portions of the province's territory, launching attacks against the civilian population.

The trial opened on Friday, October 25, 2024 before the Bukavu Garrison Military Court, which deployed a mobile court on the Miti axis to give victims and witnesses

easier access to the trial. The tribunal will then continue its hearings in Walungu, and its verdict is expected in the first half of November.

TRIAL International supported the Congolese NGOs that provided awareness-raising and accompaniment to the victims so that they could participate in the trial and coordinated the work of the lawyers' collective representing the victims throughout the legal proceedings.

TRIAL International's work on this case is carried out within the framework of the South Kivu International Criminal Justice Task Force, an informal network of international actors who collaborate to support the work of Congolese courts in investigating and prosecuting mass crimes in the DRC.

TRIAL International is a non-governmental organization fighting impunity for international crimes and supporting victims in their quest for justice. TRIAL International takes an innovative approach to the law, paving the way to justice for survivors of unspeakable sufferings. The organization provides legal assistance, litigates cases, develops local capacity, and pushes the human rights agenda forward.

Contact:
Zoé Goy
media@trialinternational.org
www.trialinternational.org
@trial