



A RESPONSIVE READING FOR THE WOMEN OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Spirit of Compassion, who hears the cries of all those who suffer
from war, famine, and violence,

**Be with the women of the Congo whose bodies, lives, and families
are torn apart by sexual violence.**

Spirit of Love, who sees the brutality and mutilation that have
become daily realities for the Congolese women,

Bring healing to their bodies, their minds, and their spirits.

Spirit of Justice, who calls us to see, hear, and respond to the
injustice and suffering caused by sexual violence,

**Embolden us to speak out against those who use rape as a weapon
of war.**

Spirit of Oneness, who seeks to reconcile all that is broken in this
world,

**Unify us as we work to bring an end to violence against women and
girls around the globe.**

Amen.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE CONGO

- The United Nations has declared that the sexual violence in the Congo is the worst in the world.
- As many as one in two Congolese women have been the victim of sexual violence.
- Over the last ten years, more than 200,000 Congolese women and girls have been raped. In the province of South Kivu alone, local health centers report that an average of 40 women are raped daily.
- More than 600 women and girls were raped along the Congo-Angola border during a mass expulsion of illegal immigrants in September/October 2010.
- 70% of these women go without medical treatment because of inadequate facilities, poor infrastructure, and poverty.
- The brutality of the sexual violence leaves many women with devastating physical conditions, such as genital lesions, traumatic fistulae, and HIV.



The Religious Institute **Congo Sabbath Initiative** is an effort to engage faith communities in educating their congregants about violence against women in the Congo. We support the partnership of V-Day, UNICEF, and the United Nations in their “Stop Raping Our Greatest Resource, Power to Women and Girls of the DRC” Campaign (www.stoprapeindrc.org). This is a global campaign to increase pressure at all levels to do more to stop rape in the Congo while highlighting the role of women as activists. One result of the campaign will be the establishment of the City of Joy in Bukavu—a center for women who have survived rape and torture, where they will receive medical treatment, education, leadership training, and a chance to earn income.

Fifty-three national religious leaders have joined the Religious Institute in calling on congregations across the country to participate in a Congo Sabbath to raise awareness about the crisis in the Congo and to raise money for the City of Joy. Visit www.religiousinstitute.org to learn more about the Congo Sabbath campaign and the many ways congregations are getting involved.

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