

THE FDLR AS AN IDEOLOGICAL ENGINE – HOW DRC STATE SUPPORT SUSTAINS HATE SPEECH AND ANTI-RWANDA INCITEMENT



The conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo is fundamentally fueled not only by military actions but by a sustained campaign of hate speech and anti-Rwanda ideology, actively perpetuated by the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and facilitated by state alliances.

A detailed examination of the latest UN Group of Experts' midterm report (S/2025/858) reveals that the government in Kinshasa, while publicly advocating for peace, systematically sustains armed groups whose core identity is rooted in genocide-era ideology and virulent anti-Rwandan rhetoric. This ideological warfare, as much as military collaboration, is a primary driver of regional instability.

U.S. Freezes Somalia Humanitarian Assistance Over Aid Management Issues

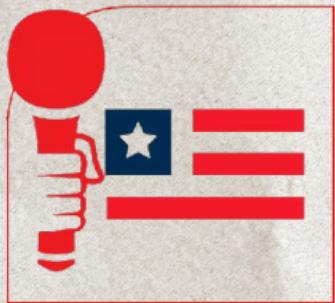


The United States suspended humanitarian assistance to Somalia on January 8, 2026, citing the need to ensure strict oversight and accountability in the delivery of life-saving aid. U.S. officials said the decision is guided by a zero-tolerance policy on waste, theft, or misuse of humanitarian assistance.

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TUTSI-BANYAMULENGE AND HEMA COMMUNITIES PETITION UN OVER ALLEGED ATROCITIES IN EASTERN DR CONGO



New York — Representatives of the Tutsi-Banyamulenge and Hema communities from eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have formally petitioned the United Nations, urging expanded investigations into what they describe as systematic persecution, mass killings, and potential genocidal acts committed against their populations since 2017.

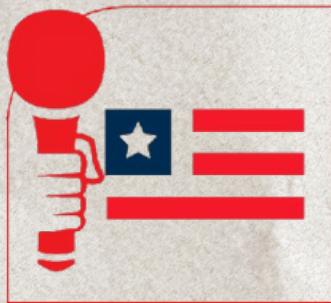
In a detailed memorandum addressed to the President of the UN Human Rights Council, the President of the UN Security Council, and UN Secretary-General António Guterres, the communities called for an inclusive and impartial interpretation of the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry established under UN resolutions S-37/1 (February 2025) and 60/22 (October 2025).

The document was also copied to senior UN legal and genocide prevention officials, including Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs Elinor Hammarskjöld and Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide Chaloka Beyani.

Call for Expanded Mandate

At the center of the petition is a demand that the UN formally interpret the term “eastern DRC” to include North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri provinces—areas where the communities say armed violence, ethnic targeting, and mass atrocities are most severe.

Citing precedents from UN inquiries in Darfur, Myanmar, and Ethiopia, the authors argue that territorial references in investigative mandates must be interpreted functionally, covering all regions where violations occur.



U.S. Embassy in Tanzania Temporarily Suspends Certain Visa Issuances Following Executive Order

The United States Embassy in Tanzania announced on January 8, 2026, that, effective January 1, 2026, it has temporarily suspended the issuance of certain visas to Tanzanian citizens, following U.S. President Donald Trump's Executive Order No. 10998. The measure affects a range of visa categories, including non-immigrant and immigrant permits.

Visa Suspensions and Exceptions

In its official statement, the embassy clarified: "Pursuant to Presidential Proclamation No. 10998, effective January 1, 2026, the United States has suspended the issuance of certain visas to Tanzanian citizens." The suspension covers visas previously issued for family visits, tourism, medical treatment, short-term professional engagements, and conferences. Additionally, visas for students and trainees attending academic or professional programs, as well as immigrant visas for relocation to the United States, are temporarily halted.

Certain categories of Tanzanians remain eligible for U.S. visas. These include green card holders, individuals traveling for international sporting events, dual nationals, and Tanzanians employed by U.S. government institutions. The embassy emphasized that visas issued before January 1, 2026, at 12:01 p.m. remain valid, and new applications will be reviewed under the updated regulations.

The Executive Order, which came into effect on January 1, 2026, restricts visa access for citizens of 39 countries, citing concerns over document integrity and security screening. The U.S. government highlighted that some countries, including Tanzania, lack reliable systems for collecting, storing, and verifying identity data, which could allow individuals who pose security threats to obtain visas.

Additional measures include enhanced visa screening, such as evaluating applicants' social media activity and reviewing certain visas previously issued. "We will review the affected countries every six months to assess improvements in data-sharing and security measures," the U.S. Embassy stated. The review could result in the restoration of visa services for compliant countries.

The current list of affected nations largely includes African countries such as Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Chad, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, and Somalia, alongside other nations like Yemen, Afghanistan, Haiti, Iran, and Libya. The U.S. has noted that the list may be expanded if additional countries are found to fall short of visa security standards.

Greenland and Denmark Diplomats Hold Talks at White House as Trump Revives Ownership Push

Senior diplomats from Greenland and Denmark met with White House officials on January 8, 2026, in response to renewed statements by U.S. President Donald Trump that the United States should consider acquiring Greenland, the large autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark. The meeting in Washington, D.C., brought together Denmark's ambassador to the United States, Jesper Møller Sørensen, and Greenland's chief representative to Washington, Jacob Isbostethsen, with senior members of the National Security Council and lawmakers on Capitol Hill. The talks followed Trump's repeated public remarks about Greenland's strategic value to U.S. national security.

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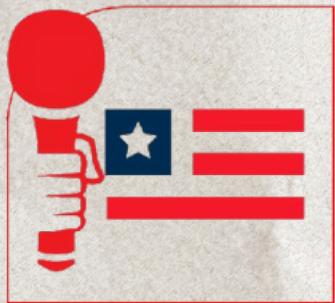


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RWANDA EXTENDS REDUCED GORILLA TREKKING FEES TO BOOST REGIONAL TOURISM



Rwanda has extended promotional pricing for gorilla trekking permits through the entirety of 2026, a move designed to broaden access to one of the country's most iconic wildlife experiences while continuing to support conservation financing and community development. On January 5, 2026, the Rwanda Development Board (RDB) publicly announced that discounted permit rates will remain effective until 31 December 2026, with the exception of the peak tourism season between June and October when standard pricing applies.

Under the promotional structure, Rwandan citizens and residents of the East African Community (EAC) qualify for permits priced at USD 200. Other African visitors and foreign residents of the continent are eligible for the reduced rate of USD 500, while international tourists outside Africa continue to pay the standard USD 1,500 for a permit.

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Venezuela Begins Release of Political Prisoners After Maduro's Capture

The Venezuelan government has begun freeing detainees widely regarded by human rights groups as political prisoners, describing the move as a gesture of goodwill.

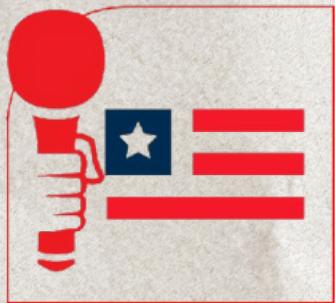
Spain's foreign ministry confirmed that five of its nationals were among those released, including prominent Venezuelan-Spanish activist Rocío San Miguel. Her family told U.S. media she was transferred to the Spanish embassy in Caracas.

The releases follow the dramatic U.S. operation last Saturday in which President Nicolás Maduro was seized in Caracas and flown to New York to face drug trafficking charges. Washington has long demanded the release of political prisoners, particularly during periods

of heightened repression around elections and protests.

Jorge Rodríguez, head of Venezuela's National Assembly and brother of interim president Delcy Rodríguez, announced on state television that "a significant number" of detainees would be freed immediately, though he did not specify names or figures. Human rights groups estimate hundreds remain behind bars, with only a handful released so far. He framed the decision as a step toward "national unity and peaceful coexistence."





ISRAEL BECOMES FIRST NATION TO FORMALLY RECOGNIZE SOMALILAND'S INDEPENDENCE



JERUSALEM / HARGEISA – In a landmark diplomatic shift that has sent shockwaves through the Horn of Africa, Israel officially recognized the Republic of Somaliland as a sovereign and independent nation on Friday. The move makes Israel the first UN member state to formally acknowledge the breakaway region's independence since it separated from Somalia in 1991.

The historic agreement was formalized during a videoconference between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Somaliland President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi. Netanyahu described the moment as a “historic milestone,” confirming that both nations have agreed to establish full diplomatic ties, including the immediate appointment of ambassadors and the opening of embassies.

President Abdullahi announced that Somaliland will officially join the Abraham Accords, the U.S.-brokered framework aimed at normalizing relations between Israel and Muslim-majority nations. Abdullahi hailed the decision as a “step toward regional and global peace,” emphasizing Somaliland’s commitment to building partnerships that promote stability across the Middle East and Africa.

The timing of the move is seen by analysts as strategically significant. Somaliland occupies a vital position on the Gulf of Aden, overlooking the Bab al-Mandab Strait—a critical chokepoint for global maritime trade that has recently been destabilized by Houthi rebel activity.



U.S. Expands Visa Bond Program to 40+ Countries Under Trump Administration Policy

The U.S. Department of State has released an updated list of countries whose citizens will now be required to post financial bonds when applying for certain U.S. visitor visas, marking a significant expansion of the Trump administration’s visa enforcement strategy.

The policy, implemented under Section 221(g)(3) of the Immigration and Nationality Act and formalized through a Temporary Final Rule, establishes a pilot program requiring nationals from more than 40 countries to post a bond ranging from \$5,000 to \$15,000 when applying for B1/B2 business and tourist visas.

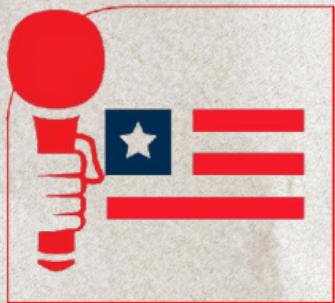
The measure is intended to curb visa overstays, which the administration has repeatedly identified as a major contributor to unlawful presence in the United States.

Nigeria, Uganda, Venezuela, Bangladesh, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Nepal, Tanzania, Zambia, and The Gambia, as well as several countries in Africa, the Caribbean, Central Asia, and the Pacific.

Implementation dates vary, with some countries already subject to the rule since August and October 2025, and others scheduled for enforcement beginning January 1 or January 21, 2026.

How the Visa Bond Works
Under the program, applicants who are otherwise eligible for a B1/B2 visa may be required to post a bond as a condition of issuance. The exact amount—\$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000—is determined by a consular officer during the visa interview based on individual risk factors and visa statistics.

Applicants must complete Form I-352 (Immigration Bond) and submit payment exclusively through the U.S. Treasury’s official Pay.gov platform. Officials have emphasized



GIRLS' CLOTHING AND CULTURAL DEBATE IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD



Cultural norms and modesty

Across societies, expectations about dress are shaped by long-standing cultural norms. In many communities, *modesty is a core social value, and clothing that is short or décolleté may be viewed as inappropriate or disrespectful*. These standards are often learned early and reinforced through family, education, and community practices, making dress a visible marker of cultural belonging.

In contrast, other cultures—particularly in highly urbanized or Western contexts—tend to place greater emphasis on individual expression and personal comfort. In such settings, short clothing or low necklines are commonly understood as fashion choices rather than moral statements. Misunderstandings arise when people from different cultural backgrounds interpret the same clothing through very different value systems.

Age is a critical consideration, especially when the subject involves girls rather than adult women. Many cultures draw a clear line between adult self-expression and the protection of minors, emphasizing dignity, safety, and childhood innocence. Clothing choices for girls may therefore be judged through a lens of safeguarding rather than autonomy, regardless of broader fashion trends.

Religion plays a significant role in shaping attitudes toward dress in many societies. Religious teachings may prescribe specific guidelines for covering the body, particularly for females, and these expectations often extend beyond places of worship into daily life. In such contexts, revealing clothing can be interpreted as conflicting with moral or spiritual obligations.



Masisi Drone Attacks Spark Debate Over State Responsibility as Rebels Honor Victims

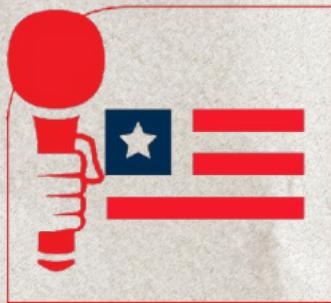
The AFC/M23 rebel movement on Thursday buried 22 civilians killed during recent drone attacks in Masisi Territory, North Kivu Province, in ceremonies that underscored both the human toll of the conflict and the political controversy surrounding responsibility for the strikes.

The ceremony, held at Goma's Stade de l'Unité before burial in Mubambiyo, was framed by the group as a tribute to “innocent civilians cowardly massacred.” The rebels directly accused the Congolese military coalition—comprising the national army (FARDC), Burundian troops, Wazalendo militias, the FDLR, and foreign mercenaries—of carrying out the strikes, the first of which hit Masisi Centre on January 2.

While Congolese authorities have not formally claimed responsibility for the strikes, some officials and pro-government voices have dismissed the burial as a “Rwandan manipulation,” referring to the common government accusation that M23 is backed by Rwanda. This dismissal has provoked a forceful rebuttal from critics within the country.

A poignant French-language commentary, circulating widely on Congolese social media, challenges this narrative head-on. “These are not rumours. It is not a setup, nor a ‘Rwandan manipulation’,” the text states.





Festive Rwanda: City Celebrations Boost Tourism and Community Life



Rwanda's festive season has increasingly evolved into a period of inclusive community engagement, marked by public events that blend celebration, culture, and civic participation. Across Kigali and other urban centers, holiday activities are being positioned not only as moments of leisure, but also as platforms for social cohesion and shared national identity.

One of the most visible highlights this season has been the Radisson Blu Christmas Tree Lighting, an event that drew thousands of children and families. Beyond its symbolic value, the gathering underscored the growing role of private-sector actors in supporting community-centered celebrations. The event provided a safe and joyful space for children, reinforcing themes of generosity,

unity, and collective well-being.

Such initiatives reflect a broader shift in how festive traditions are celebrated in Rwanda. Rather than being confined to private or commercial spaces, holiday activities are increasingly designed as open, accessible experiences. This approach aligns with national efforts to promote inclusivity and ensure that public celebrations resonate across social and economic groups.

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TRUMP MOBILE DELAYS FIRST SHIPMENTS OF GOLD-COLORED PHONES

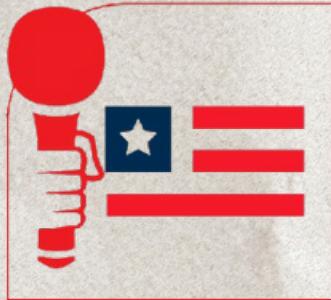


Bitcoin is facing a steep downturn as December begins, succumbing to a wave of global market turbulence. On December 1, Bitcoin slid roughly 6% and at one point traded around \$85,500–\$86,000 — marking one of its sharpest single-day drops in recent months. This decline comes after a punishing November, itself the worst month for the asset since mid-2021 in dollar terms.

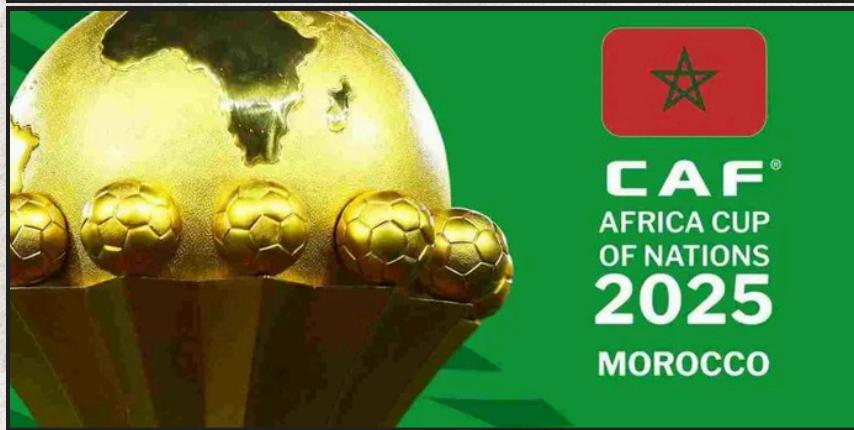
The current selloff has been driven by a combination of macroeconomic jitters and waning investor appetite for risk. A shift in global sentiment — driven in part by rising government bond yields after signals of potential rate increases from entities such as the Bank of Japan (BoJ) — triggered a broader retreat from speculative assets, including cryptocurrencies. At the same time, liquidity across crypto markets has weakened, contributing to heavier losses.

The fallout has had ripple effects beyond just price charts. For example, MicroStrategy — one of the largest corporate holders of Bitcoin — announced a sharp revision down of its 2025 earnings forecast, in response to the prolonged slump in Bitcoin's value. That announcement deepened investor unease, reinforcing concerns about how corporate exposure to Bitcoin could exacerbate downside risk in a bear market.





AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS (AFCON) ENTERS QUARTER-FINAL STAGE AS HEAVYWEIGHTS HOLD FIRM



The Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) 2025, hosted by Morocco, has reached a decisive stage after the conclusion of the Round of 16 matches between 3 and 6 January 2026, confirming the eight teams that will contest the quarter-finals. The knockout phase has delivered high-intensity encounters, dramatic finishes, and confirmation that Africa's traditional powerhouses remain firmly in contention for continental supremacy.

Senegal, Mali, Morocco, Cameroon, Egypt, Nigeria, Algeria, and Côte d'Ivoire secured their places in the last eight following a series of closely fought matches across multiple host cities. Several ties were decided in extra time or via penalties, underlining the narrow margins separating teams at this advanced stage of the tournament. The quarter-finals are scheduled for 9 and 10 January 2026.

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PSG Clinch French Super Cup in Dramatic Shootout Victory Over Marseille

Paris Saint-Germain secured the **Trophée des Champions (French Super Cup)** on January 8, 2026, defeating Olympique de Marseille **4-1** on penalties after a **2-2** draw in regulation time at the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium in Kuwait City. The win marks PSG's **fourteenth Super Cup title and their fourth in a row**, extending their record in the competition.

PSG took an early lead when **Ousmane Dembélé scored in the 13th minute**, lifting the ball over the goalkeeper to open the scoring. Marseille responded in the second half with a **Mason Greenwood penalty in the 76th minute** and then went ahead when PSG defender **Willian Pacho inadvertently turned the ball into his own net in the 87th minute**.

Just as it seemed Marseille would hold on, Gonçalo Ramos struck a dramatic equaliser in stoppage time (90+5') to force the match into a penalty shootout, energising PSG and their supporters.

In the shootout, goalkeeper Lucas Chevalier emerged as the hero, saving two spot-kicks from Marseille's Matt O'Riley and Hamed Traore, while Ramos, Vitinha, Nuno Mendes and Désiré Doué converted for PSG to seal the victory. Doué's penalty proved decisive in the 4-1 shootout scoreline. PSG coach Luis Enrique praised his team's resilience, noting the character shown to recover and force penalties after falling behind late in the match. "We showed our ability to fight back, even in the final minute," he said, underlining the club's competitive mindset.