



INSURGENTS MURDER INNOCENT VILLAGERS

Your help is urgently needed!

Dear ICC family,

Will the cry of the newly orphaned child that pierces the night like a knife ever come to an end in the DR Congo? The thought of this cry unsettles me and moves me to action. The brutality and slaughter of innocent people continues. And in its wake, children are orphaned in an instant.

The plight of orphan children touched our collective hearts back in 2002 when we went to this African country to try to help rescue and restore the lives of children. And you, our faithful ICC family of supporters, have journeyed with us making it possible to provide the care that hundreds of children have needed.

Many of the children we first brought into the ICC family are now college educated and are living successful lives of service in their community. They were given the opportunity to learn of Jesus. The spiritual lessons and values taught and shown to them at Patmos Children's village have stayed with them. What a blessing you have been and continue to be!

And yet, our work in Congo is far from complete, and that's why I'm turning to you once again, because I have no place else to turn!

I recently spent several hours on the phone with Désiré, Patmos Children's Village director. The story he told touched my heart. It was yet another tragedy:



This child, and many others, lost their families when rebels attacked their village in the DR Congo. Hundreds were killed. A critical, life-and-death plea has been made to take in these catastrophically orphaned kids. Your help is urgently needed.

- ❖ Insurgent soldiers had decimated 116 families. These were innocent people — parents and children — just trying to eke out an existence.
- ❖ The Adventist church leadership in that region contacted Désiré asking for urgent assistance.
- ❖ Members in three churches were desperately trying to provide care for 42 newly orphaned children. They were housing them in the church and letting them sleep on the floor.
- ❖ There were more children, but two had died already. Others were sick and in desperate need of immediate care.



Your support is needed to care for this orphaned child. This child has no way of surviving alone in the world and is now completely dependent upon the ICC family to provide all the essentials needed: nurturing caregivers, food, shelter, medical care, and education. Thank you for your help!

Would we agree to help these children?

Our ICC administrative team gathered for prayer and careful consideration of the emerging story. Team members expressed a desire to do something. We urged Désiré to go and visit the children and further evaluate their condition. I had no idea the danger in which we were putting Désiré.

In the area he visited, UN forces have installed an antenna so he could communicate with the outside world. Here is an edited excerpt of the report I received from Désiré.

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Dear Rick,

I would like to let you know the current situation on the ground at three sites in which the 38 orphaned children live and four non-accompanied children. The journey from Bukavu to Bunyakiri is very scary. Nobody would make it twice. And to arrive here, we thank you for your prayers because God has understood them. It took us two days.

There are four reasons which make it difficult for us if we are fortunate enough to return home.

1. We met nine barricades; some by the state agents and three by different rebel groups. There were barricades by park rangers. At the end of our trip, there was a barricade to enter Bunyakiri which is a built-up area. We had to pay an entry tax. Insecurity is a daily scenario. Farmers do not enjoy the products of their labor, and the rebels harvest their crops and own everything in the area. All the

youth in the region have guns for their protection. Unfortunately, they use them to loot the population's properties.

2. The road is very difficult, and it is a rainy season with a lot of broken vehicles on the way. We walked a lot of kilometers pushing the motorbikes.

3. At the last entry barrier, they confiscated all photographic apparatuses because life in this part of the country is totally different from life of any other human being on earth. In this region, killing a person is very easy, and is done with impunity. People are killed every day. They are not ashamed to undress somebody's clothes to leave him unclothed. If it were not for some members of the Adventist church here, we could not have any authorization to enter the region.

4. The government laws are not applicable. Rebels rule the region as they want. The rebel leaders ask for money, the peasants living in the region ask for humanitarian aid, and there is extreme poverty. Food items are very cheap, because nobody goes to buy food for fear of insecurity. On the other hand, man-

ufactured items are very expensive (medicine, soap, sugar, soft drinks, etc.) due to the inaccessibility of the region. The rebels are active in mining and sell their products to buy guns and weapons. It is a reason why insecurity is persistent, because even the government does not control the situation.

On Friday, one day after we arrived, we participated in the burial of a child. Instead of 42 children, we met 56 children. The additional children were gathered from the forest by the Adventist church members. We were told that three weeks ago, there were 118 children. Of those 62, children were given to two local NGOs operating in Bukavu town.



Désiré and his group had to push their motorbikes through mile after mile of mud to reach the children.



We wanted to apply the advice given to us by taking 38 children of the 56. But now, we are asking ourselves what to do, because after we leave, the 18 remaining children will die since we are eye witnesses that it is impossible for an orphaned child to live without any resource or receiving family.

For the three nights we have spent here, we have never thought of sleeping because of fear of getting slaughtered.

We were authorized yesterday to preach but we were forbidden to read the Bible verses which talk about murder and killing and violence toward women and girls.

The rebel leaders refused to let us give to people the medicine and food we brought. They only allowed us to give clothes to orphaned children. After the selection of children, this afternoon we are looking for the children's birth certificates at the legal offices.

Before we return tomorrow, we ask you to precisely tell us what to do for the additional 18 children. Shall we return with the children or leave them in their distress, trauma and despair? We need an urgent answer accordingly because we are concerned about their physical and psychological health.

We have insomnia or sleeplessness. We are accommodated in the church. We sleep on the ground on mats without covers or blankets. There is no bed and mattress. It is very cold here and the temperature is 15 C (59 F) Here, it is almost hell.

Waiting for your urgent reply, thank you for your good collaboration,

For ICC-Congo Project
M.SC. MURHIMA DESIRE

It's not often that one has the power to choose life or death for another human being. But as you can tell from Désiré's message, that is the choice he faced.

What should he have done?

What would you have done?

When I asked Désiré how many children he proposed to take, here is how he responded:

Papa and Mama Fleck, it is difficult to abandon these children in this situation



Would you have left these innocent children to suffer and die knowing you could have helped them?

in which they are. From the first group of 42, two children are already dead. I cannot think to abandon the other 18 in this situation. I just split it into 3 groups. We will leave with one today, the other will arrive on Thursday and the last group on Sunday. Pray for us because there are many barriers and huge difficulties.

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ICC board members have voiced their support for taking in the children. After all, this is our mission to rescue children and then to help restore their lives by placing them in a loving family. Our board chairman, Cody Erwin stated, “Let’s see what we can do to help as many as we can in this terrible situation.”

As of the writing of this letter, we are evaluating options as to the best way to accommodate the new children. Fortunately, there is some space in current homes at the children’s village that may accommodate some of the children. Also, some older children are almost ready to become independent, and more space will be available.

This is a huge undertaking, and the children need your support in different ways.

First, please pray right now and ask God,

- ✓ To protect these new children,
- ✓ To direct the plan being developed for their care, and
- ✓ To help you act.

Second, since additional funds are needed to care for these children here are some practical things you can do,

- ✓ Raise your monthly support, if you have the capacity, because the orphan children need it now,
- ✓ Give a single gift to help provide for the initial care the children need,
- ✓ Share this letter with your family, friends and colleagues, and encourage them to join this mission of mercy for the orphan children,
- ✓ Pray that God will bring about an abundant response to this urgent need.



You have the opportunity to help restore the life of an orphan child whose parents were brutally murdered. They have lost so much. Let’s work to provide the care they need and inspire them with hope for the future. Thank you!

In closing I do want to acknowledge that you have given so much already toward the care of the children. Yet, another group of children have arrived. God continues to ask us to take care of orphans in their distress. Please join with us in welcoming these children and helping to provide for the care and love they need so much. You can use the response coupon included with this letter to designate how you want your gift used.

May God bless you for your kindness!



Rick Fleck
President

P.S. These children lost their families when their parents were murdered. Désiré Murhima took a harrowing journey to visit them. As you can recognize from Désiré's story, this is an urgent appeal. Our board supports caring for these children. The costs for providing for these children will mount quickly. Please send in a gift of support today. And to help provide the ongoing care the children need, please consider making it a recurring gift each month. Thank you!

