

## **What do we know of the Kitchanga massacre?**

In the middle of the M23 rebellion at the end of February 2013, clashes erupted between the APCLS (Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo, an armed group of hundred ethnic groups hostile to Rwandophones) and the 812<sup>th</sup> Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) regiment. Colonel François Safari Mudahunga, known as “Delta Mike”, headed this regiment. His MP was none other than Lieutenant-Colonel François Muhire Sebasonza. Both were close friends of Bosco Ntaganda, the Congolese army officer behind the M23 rebellion (fearing that he would be arrested by the International Criminal Court for crimes committed in Ituri province for which he had already formally charged, Bosco Ntaganda defected from the Congolese army, leading dozens of former comrades in arms behind him).

In Kitchanga, it all began with the assassination on 16 February 2013, of the APCLS operations’ officer by a joint police-army patrol. In retaliation, some 50 APCLS fighters attacked one of the positions of the 812<sup>th</sup> Regiment on a hill. But the clash between the APCLS fighters and the 812<sup>th</sup> regimental soldiers turned into the massacre of civilians, mostly Hundés, who were accused of supporting the APCLS.

The Congolese military judiciary had ruled out that these might be mere clashes. It only counted 12 soldiers and 5 APCLS rebels killed. Among the civilians, it counted 206 deaths by bullet, and 191 wounded. And in terms of materiel goods, 222 acts of looting and 206 houses were burned. This was an in-depth investigation. 465 people were heard.

The UN Panel of Experts on the Congo devoted a chapter of its July 2013 report to the events in Kitchanga. It described the massacre as the result of a failed integration of armed groups within the FARDC. In 2013, the North Kivu General Staff decided to integrate some 300 APCLS fighters into its ranks. The integration of the APCLS was not to the liking of the 812<sup>th</sup> regiment, mainly Rwandophone, which was afraid to lose control of the town. When APCLS attacked one of his positions, Colonel Mudahunga called his men to massacre Hundé civilians in Kitchanga.

"The Panel obtained a recorded statement in which Mudahunga instructed his officers to “kill anyone in Kitchanga. (...). He considered that all the Hundés were supporters of the APCLS."

Extract from the report of the UN expert group on the Congo 2013 - pages 28, section 124

[http://www.un.org/french/documents/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/433](http://www.un.org/french/documents/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/433)

The UN experts accused the men of the 812<sup>th</sup> Regiment not only of having taken an active part in the massacre, but also of having facilitated it upstream by supplying weapons to Rwandophone militias, militias which were also accused.

"A former M23 officer and two Congolese army officers operating under Mudahunga told the Panel that on 24 February 2013 [before the first incidents] both Mudahunga and Muhire had distributed weapons to Rwandophone youth and herders in Kitchanga and in the neighbouring IDP camp in Kahe and had incited them to attack the Hundés. »Extract from the report of the UN expert group on the Congo - page 28, section 122

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