



27 January 2025

To all media houses: For Immediate Release

COPE CALL ON PRESIDENT TO ADDRESS NATION ON SA SOLDIERS' DEATH IN DRC

The Congress of the People (COPE) expresses its deepest condolences to the families of the nine South African National Defence Force (SANDF) soldiers who tragically lost their lives in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

These brave soldiers were engaged in intense combat with the M23 rebel group near Goma, the provincial capital of the eastern DRC.

As the Commander-in-Chief of the SANDF, President Cyril Ramaphosa must take full accountability for the deployment of our troops in this conflict. He must come out of hiding and urgently address the nation on the situation and South Africa's response thereto.

The deployment, part of the peacekeeping missions by SADC and the UN, has led to many deaths and raised serious concerns about the support and preparedness of our soldiers.

It is unacceptable that our soldiers were sent into a volatile and escalating conflict without adequate resources, training and support. The lack of proper equipment and logistical support has left our troops vulnerable and ill-prepared to face the dangers posed by the well-equipped M23 rebels.

COPE calls on President Ramaphosa to urgently address the following issues:

1. Accountability and Transparency: Provide a complete account of the decision-making process that led to the deployment of SANDF troops in the eastern DRC, including the assessment of risks and the measures taken to ensure the safety and well-being of our soldiers.

2. Support and Resources: Ensure that our troops are adequately equipped and supported to carry out their missions safely and effectively. This includes providing necessary supplies, ammunition, and medical support.

COPE stands in solidarity with the families of the fallen soldiers and demands that President Ramaphosa and Minister of Defence Angie Motshekga take immediate action to address these critical issues. The lives of our soldiers should never be put at risk due to inadequate planning and support.

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