



dr. Denis  
**Mukwege**  
Foundation

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For immediate release

### Media contacts

Media inquiries should be directed to:

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### Interviews and media requests

Dr. Mukwege's travel schedule is private. Interview requests with Dr. Mukwege and media visits to Panzi must be scheduled through the joint communications team of Dr. Mukwege, Panzi and the Mukwege Foundation.

The Media and Communications team will process requests via our internal protocols. **No interviews with Dr. Mukwege will be granted through partner organizations.**

We encourage all partners to arrange media opportunities for themselves to discuss our joint missions and work. Please refer to the talking points below and feel free to reach out with suggestions or questions.

### Press releases and updates

Statements, press releases, and latest information regarding Dr. Mukwege are published on the websites of [Panzi Foundation DRC](http://www.panzi.org), [Panzi Foundation USA](http://www.panzi.org) and the [Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation](http://www.panzi.org).

The following official social media channels are also updated regularly:

Dr. Denis Mukwege:

 <https://www.facebook.com/DrDenisMukwege>

 <https://twitter.com/DenisMukwege>

Panzi Foundation DRC:

 <https://www.facebook.com/PanziFoundationDRC>

 <https://twitter.com/PanziFoundation>

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Panzi Foundation USA:

 <https://www.facebook.com/PanziFoundationUsa>

 <https://twitter.com/PanziUSA>

Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation:

 <https://www.facebook.com/MukwegeFoundation>

 <https://twitter.com/MukwegeFound>

When re-posting statements from Dr. Denis Mukwege, or referencing a statement from Panzi, partners should link to a Panzi Hospital and Foundations (DRC or USA) or Mukwege Foundation source, including Dr. Denis Mukwege's verified Facebook. *Please do not re-post statements from Dr. Mukwege, any Panzi Official, or the Foundations, without providing the appropriate provenance.* Media and other authorities should be able to clearly identify official statements.

### Biography

#### Dr. Denis Mukwege

Dr. Denis Mukwege, born on 1 March 1955, is a world-renowned gynaecological surgeon as well as the founder and medical director of Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). After having studied in France, he established the hospital in 1999 as a clinic for gynaecological and obstetric care, as he expected to primarily work on maternal health.

Immediately after the opening of the hospital, Dr. Mukwege noticed the high number of women in the region who needed treatment of their wounds caused by violent sexual assault and rape. His first patient was a survivor of rape whose reproductive organs had been destroyed.

Over the years, Dr. Mukwege became the world's leading expert on "repairing" the internal physical damage caused by rape.

In October 2012, he was violently attacked and his family was held at gunpoint at his home in an assassination attempt. Joseph Bizimana, his friend and security guard, was killed. The attack came several weeks after a speech at the United Nations where Dr. Mukwege denounced the country's decade-long conflict and called for those responsible to be brought to justice.

Dr. Mukwege and his family fled to Europe for a short period of time. Despite continuous threats against him, he returned to Eastern Congo in January 2013 and resumed his work at the hospital, responding to the call from the women of Bukavu.

Dr. Mukwege has become a global advocate for gender equality and the elimination of rape as a weapon of war.

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He received numerous international awards for his work, including the UN Human Rights Prize, the Sakharov Prize of the European Parliament, the Olof Palme Prize and the Clinton Global Citizen Award. TIME magazine listed him among the world's 100 most influential persons and the Carter Foundation named him a “citizen of the world.”

### Key information and statistics for publication

- **Dr. Denis Mukwege:** Dr. Mukwege, born in 1955, is a world-renowned gynaecological surgeon and medical director of Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). He founded Panzi Hospital in 1999 and was co-founder of Panzi Foundation DRC in 2008.
- **Panzi Hospital:** Panzi Hospital is situated in the densely-populated neighbourhood of Panzi in Bukavu, the capital of the South Kivu province in eastern Congo. Today, the hospital employs around 370 doctors, nurses, and support staff, and serves a population of 400,000 people, providing a wide range of health services.
- **Panzi Foundation DRC:** Panzi Foundation DRC, which is located at close proximity to the hospital, provides housing, meals, and access to a variety of services, such as literacy training, support to set up small businesses and different forms of psychological support, including music therapy.
- **International efforts and recognition:** Dr. Mukwege has become a global advocate for gender equality and the elimination of rape as a weapon of war. He received numerous international awards for his work, including the UN Human Rights Prize, the Sakharov Prize of the European Parliament, the Olof Palme Prize and the Clinton Global Citizen Award. TIME magazine listed him among the world's 100 most influential persons and the Carter Foundation named him a “citizen of the world.”
- **Sexual violence in DRC:** Sexual violence is a major problem in east Congo. Even though the civil war officially ended in 2003, violence and instability are still dominating the life of the population. Decades of fighting, including the use of rape as a method of warfare, caused a climate in which sexual violence is widespread. In recent years, the profile of rape victims has changed and today includes an increasing number of children.
- **Statistics of Panzi DRC:** The number of sexual violence victims arriving at Panzi Hospital and Foundation DRC has averaged between 2,000-3,000 persons per year since 2014. Thus far in 2018, they have treated 2,077 sexual violence victims, with many more unfortunately expected due to the escalating incidents of sexual violence and mass rapes in nearby regions.
- **Escalation of sexual violence:** In recent months, South and North Kivu have seen an upsurge of sexual violence, including mass-rapes. For example, in February, militia groups attacked the village of Kabikokole, and in April the village of Wameli.

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Panzi was able to deliver services in the affected areas and treated 136 women and 2 men who were victims of sexual violence.

- **The Panzi response:** The hospital has 450 beds, approximately one-third of which are reserved for survivors of sexual violence. About 40 to 60 percent of the women treated at Panzi Hospital for sexual violence are unable to return home after having received medical treatment, either because of the severity of their injuries, ongoing violence, or, most often, the stigma associated with sexual violence.
- **Holistic care:** The Panzi system's holistic model of care provides survivors of sexual violence with medical, psychological, legal and socio-economic support. Access to medical and psychological care helps survivors to heal. Legal assistance and socio-economic support, such as vocational training, enables them to reintegrate in society. All together ensures the well-being of individuals and benefits society as a whole, as survivors return to contribute to the society and the economy. Thus, holistic care is vital for individuals and communities.
- **Political context DRC:** President Joseph Kabila announced that presidential elections will take place on 23 December. Dr. Mukwege has called for a '*transition citoyenne*' or a 'caretaker government' to organize free, fair, credible, and transparent elections. This is the only way political impasse can be resolved, repression ended, that the causes of underdevelopment, instability, and conflicts in the country can be addressed. Peace in the DRC requires a profound change of the system and not just a change of people through a parody of elections.
- **International level:** Dr. Mukwege and the Panzi team have developed a world-leading expertise in the treatment of the wounds of sexual violence. With the support of the Mukwege Foundation, they train experts in other countries. Surgeons and psychologists from Congo travelled to Guinea, Central African Republic and Rwanda. The Panzi Foundations (DRC and USA) and the Mukwege Foundation work to implement the holistic model in other parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and in other countries affected by war, including Central African Republic. In addition, in 2018 the Mukwege Chair at the University Liege was founded with the aim to build knowledge of the care of victims of sexual violence in conflict.

### Photos:

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*Dr. Denis Mukwege performs surgery at Panzi Hospital. Photo credit: Mwangaza & Ukweli*



*Portrait of Dr. Mukwege for Right Livelihood Awards by Wolfgang Schmidt*

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