

# Resolution No. 548-2020

Council Members Kelley and Zone

**FOR ADOPTION**  
**July 1, 2020**

## **AN EMERGENCY RESOLUTION**

Recognizing June 30<sup>th</sup> as Congolese Independence Day, and welcoming and celebrating with our Congolese residents and community as it continues to grow.

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WHEREAS, the Congolese people are proud to call the great community of Cleveland and Northeast Ohio their second home; and

WHEREAS, on June 30<sup>th</sup> when Congolese around the world come together to celebrate their independence, our community in Cleveland and Northeast Ohio raises the colors of the flag in unity; and

WHEREAS, like many other national flags, the Congolese flag has deep symbolism: blue symbolizes peace, red represents the blood of the country's martyrs, while yellow represents the wealth of the nation, and the star that is located in the upper left symbolizes the country's bright future; and

WHEREAS, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) gained independence from Belgium in 1960; in 1885, King Leopold II of Belgium had acquired the rights for the territory of Congo, and under international pressure, the Belgian government had reluctantly taken control of the territory as an official colony of Belgium beginning in 1908; and

WHEREAS, Congo is rich in natural resources, boasting vast deposits of industrial diamonds, cobalt, copper, gold, tantalum, tungsten, and tin, one of the largest forest reserves in Africa, and about half of the hydroelectric potential of the continent – yet it continues to have an extremely poor population; and

WHEREAS, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the second-largest country in Africa, bordering nine countries, and the people of the DRC represent over 200 ethnic groups, with nearly 250 languages and dialects spoken throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, since the 1960s, the Congolese have endured over two decades of armed conflict with over 5.4 million people killed due to war-related causes; and

WHEREAS, Congolese armed groups and elements of the army have a long, brutal history of recruiting child soldiers; the United Nations reported at least 1,000 cases of child soldier recruitment between January 2012 and August 2013; and

WHEREAS, The Democratic Republic of the Congo hosts the United Nations' largest peacekeeping mission in the world, with over 21,000 soldiers from approximately 50 different countries; due mainly to the ongoing instability in the eastern part of the country, about 450,000 refugees from the DRC remain in neighboring countries, particularly Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda; and

WHEREAS, due to unrest in the DRC the people have fled the country; according to the United Nations, the High Commissioner for Refugees, millions of people have been forced to flee their homes; and

WHEREAS, according to the U.S. State Department, in 2017 Congolese was among the largest refugee group in 2016 and 2017; nationally, Congolese made up 19 percent (the largest percentage) of the 84,994 refugees resettling in America in 2016, according to The Plain Dealer; and

WHEREAS, Ohio welcomed 1,355 Congolese refugees in 2016-2017, and as the Congolese have settled in Cleveland and Northeast Ohio, they have become part of the rich fabric of our community; and

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WHEREAS, our community has seen a steady increase in the number of Congolese living here; from our schools to our workplaces, they are living among us as neighbors and friends; and

WHEREAS, our Congolese friends have displayed tremendous resilience and are engraving their identity in our neighborhoods as leaders and essential workers of our community; and

WHEREAS, as scholars at universities such as The Ohio State University, Case Western Reserve and John Carrol, caretakers of our loved ones in hospitals like the Cleveland Clinic, assisted living facilities, and nursing homes, teachers of our children at John Marshall High School and Max Hayes, their presence has become invaluable in our community and it continues to grow; and

WHEREAS, this Council and the City of Cleveland thanks the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo for enriching our city and our community by making their second home here; and

WHEREAS, the City recognizes June 30<sup>th</sup> as Congolese Independence Day and celebrates with our newly arrived Congolese residents and with the community as it continues to grow; and

WHEREAS, this resolution constitutes an emergency measure for the immediate preservation of public peace, property, health or safety, now, therefore,

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CLEVELAND:**

**Section 1.** That this Council recognizes June 30<sup>th</sup> as Congolese Independence Day, and welcomes and celebrates with our Congolese residents and community as it continues to grow.

**Section 2.** That the Clerk of Council is directed to send a copy of this resolution to Global Cleveland, Joe Cimperman, President and Elizabeth Cusma, Program Manager.

**Section 3.** That this resolution is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and, provided it receives the affirmative vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to Council, it shall take effect and be in force immediately upon its adoption and approval by the Mayor; otherwise it shall take effect and be in force from and after the earliest period allowed by law.

jho  
7-1-2020  
FOR: Council Member Kelley

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REPORT  
after second Reading

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READ FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD TIME

READ FIRST TIME

REPORTS

and referred to

CITY CLERK

READ SECOND TIME

CITY CLERK

READ THIRD TIME on JULY 1, 2020

PRESIDENT

CITY CLERK

APPROVED

MAYOR

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