Dr. Denis Mukwege Awarded Honorary Doctorate by Rennes 2 University



On October 21st, 2022, the surgeon-gynecologist and Nobel Peace Prize winner of 2018, Dr. Denis Mukwege, received the highest academic distinction for his work and efforts to end sexual violence for victims of war in the Democratic Republic of Congo during a solemn ceremony in a full auditorium of Rennes 2 staff, students, community members and medical colleagues from the Rennes community.

In awarding the honorary doctorate title to Dr. Mukwege, Rennes 2 University wished to honor his work and his commitment that he has shown throughout his lifetime. He has made the world aware of the sexual barbarism to which victims -primarily women - are subjected in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, where gang rape has been used as a weapon of war. In 1999, he founded the Panzi Hospital where he developed a revolutionary holistic model for treating women who have been sexually abused.

Rennes 2 University President Christine Rivalan Guégo introduced Dr. Mukwege at the start of the ceremony, saying: "*Rennes 2 is particularly sensitive to your generosity and your availability during the conferences in which you participate. Thanks to you today, the humanist values of intelligence, solidarity and peace that our university stands for have been embodied. Rennes 2, and all the members of its community, are very proud and very moved by your presence*". He was also honored by speeches from Renée Dickason, Rennes 2 Professor of Civilization, Contemporary History and British Media and Jean-Philippe Harlicot, Gynecologist at the Centre Hospitalier de Rennes.

Dr. Mukwege then took the podium to accept the honorary degree, saying that "*on behalf of my staff and the survivors [of sexual violence], I would like to express my great gratitude. Through this recognition, you are expressing above all your refusal to be indifferent to a despicable, dehumanizing and devastating crime: sexual violence related to conflict. You are also shedding light on one of the darkest pages of modern history, the war that is ravaging the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo*". He underlined that, at the moment of the ceremony, "*there are 5,500,000 people displaced, without humanitarian assistance, millions of women raped: more than 70,000 being treated [at Panzi Hospital]: this is just the tip of the iceberg*". "*The work you are doing has great meaning for the victims*," he added to Renee Dickason. Dr. Mukwege, at the end of the ceremony, was greeted with a standing ovation that lasted several minutes.



Roundtable discussion that preceded the award ceremony.

Pictured from left to right: Christine Rivalan Guégo, Michel Prum, Florence Binard and Valeria Pansini

Preceding the official award ceremony, was a roundtable discussion on his autobiographical book: "La Force des Femmes" (The Power of Women). The discussion was led by University President Christine Rivalan Guégo with invited guest speakers: Florence Binard, Professor of Civilization at the University of Paris, Valeria Pansini, History Lecturer at Rennes 2 University and Michel Prum, Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Paris, in the presence of Dr. Denis Mukwege. The roundtable discussion broached issues of sexual assault and violence within the higher education setting, questions of justice in the legal system, and whether the theme of 'sexual crimes during wartime' is appropriately addressed and reflected in the teaching of wartime history.

The ceremony ended with a live concert by musicians Aurore Le Goff (piano) and Laura Le Goff (viola).

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