

The silent gesture of a Congolese player during a Sunday match between Rayon Sports FC and Police FC has ignited a firestorm of debate in Rwanda, raising questions about the line between an athlete's right to free speech and their obligations to their club.

Left footed Rayon player Heritier Luvumba, who does not have a past historical activism record, mirrored the DR Congo national team's AFCON protest by holding his hand over his mouth with two fingers to his temples after scoring an opening goal. This drew immediate attention to the ongoing conflict in eastern DR Congo.

A video circulating on social media shows the player protesting and then Isaac Mitima, his teammate, trying to halt his action by pulling his hands down.

Luvumba went further to this Instagram account and wrote in French translated into English: "Lord, we want peace between the two countries."

Diverse perspectives have been expressed on the incident, emphasizing the complexity of athlete activism.

While some laud the player's courage in using his platform to raise awareness about a critical issue, others question the appropriateness of his actions, citing potential political ramifications and a disregard for club loyalty.

Local football analysts have urged the player to clarify his intentions.

Both Rayon Sports and the national football body Ferwafa have not made any official statements.

Back home, some supporters have applauded the player's courage in raising awareness about a critical issue on social media, while others worry about political repercussions.

One fan praised the player's initiative, saying athletes should use their voices for good. "He brought attention to a conflict that often goes unnoticed."

A fan named Deogratias wrote on X, "The Zairians are not afraid. I swear, what he wrote doesn't matter, but making a sign like that in Rwanda is important! Only the message he gave and his dismissal became more widespread."

Another named Sam, " Is it surprising that someone says what they think they should? Let me ask. Where is that sign related to Rayon?"

However, another fan named Yves expressed a different view: "This is a club game, not a political platform." The player should have focused on his team and respected the club. His contract should be terminated. Let him go back to DRC"

"There's a responsibility to be mindful of the potential impacts of your actions," said one sports analyst during a broadcast. Was it a personal agenda or did he have external influences behind the act?"

Local football analysts have also emphasized the complexities involved, urging the player to clarify his intentions and calling for a comprehensive response from the club and the Rwandan football authorities.

Similar protests by DR Congo players at Tanzania's Young African FC mirrored the same gesture to raise similar concerns in their home country.

Additionally, unconfirmed sources have revealed that the army team APR FC reportedly halted the signing of a Congolese player fearing similar demonstrations.

Questions now linger about the player's future. Will the player face repercussions from his club or league?

Inside sources in Rayon have confirmed that a crisis meeting was held on Monday morning to seek advice. The club president is reported to have held talks with the player about the incident requesting him to be calm.

Rayon Sports FC defeated Law Enforcement Police FC 2-1 to remain in second position on the league table.