



Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

The situation in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri – Update

26th July 2021 (COI between 6th August 2019 and 30th June 2021)

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Explanatory Note

Country of Origin Information (COI)

This report presents Country of Origin Information (COI) on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) focusing on the current situation in the regions of **North and South Kivu, and Ituri** on issues identified to be of relevance in refugee status determination for individuals from these three regions. Research concentrated on events that took place between 6th August 2019 and 30 June 2021.

The COI presented in this report is illustrative but not exhaustive of the information available in the public domain, nor is it determinative of any individual human rights or asylum claim. All sources are publicly available and a direct hyperlink has been provided.

A list of sources and databases consulted is also provided in this report, to enable users to conduct further research and source assessments. All sources included in this report were accessed between May and July 2021.

In this report, ARC has complemented its research on English-speaking sources with French-speaking sources. Relevant sources have been unofficially translated and are described as such. **Please note that these are not official translations.**

The following reports which post-date the cut-off point have been included given that they address issues of relevance for this report:

- Médecins Sans Frontières, [*Sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, The critical need for a comprehensive response to address the needs of survivors*](#), July 2021
- [*Nord-Kivu: OLPA exige une enquête après l'agression brutale d'un journaliste à Beni*](#), 2 July 2021
- UNHCR, [*Attacks by armed group displace 20,000 civilians in eastern DRC*](#), 16 July 2021 Human Rights Watch, [*DR Congo: Free Youth Activists, Three Months On, Elisée Lwatura, Eric Muhindo Unjustly Detained*](#), 19 July 2021

Disclaimer

This document is intended to be used as a tool to help to identify relevant COI and the COI referred to in this report can be considered by decision makers in assessing asylum applications and appeals. **This report is not a substitute for individualised case-specific research and therefore this document should not be submitted in isolation as evidence to refugee decision-making authorities.** Whilst every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy, the authors accept no responsibility for any errors included in this report.

Sources and databases consulted

Not all of the sources listed here have been consulted for each issue addressed in the report. Additional sources to those individually listed were consulted via database searches. This non-exhaustive list is intended to assist in further case-specific research. To find out more about an organisation, view the 'About us' tab of a source's website.

Note that we were commissioned to search for both English and French-speaking sources.

Databases

[Asylos's Research Notes](#)

[EASO COI Portal](#)

[European Country of Origin Information Network \(ECOI\)](#)

[Relief Web](#)

[UNHCR Refworld](#)

News

[Actualite.CD](#)

[African Arguments](#) [DRC specific page]

[Afrol News](#)

[Agence Congolaise de Presse](#) [state-owned]

[All Africa](#)

[Al Jazeera](#) [DRC specific page]

[Congo Planet](#)

[Digital Congo](#)

[The East African](#)

[L'Avenir](#)

[Le Congolais](#)

[The Guardian](#) [DRC specific page]

[Inter Press Service](#)

[Jeune Afrique](#)

[The New Humanitarian](#) [DRC specific page]

[Le Phare](#)

[LePotentielonline.net](#)

[Le Soft](#)

[Radio France International](#)

[Radio Okapi](#)

[Reuters Africa](#) [DRC specific page]

[Le Soft International](#)

[Thomson Reuters Foundation](#)

Sources

[28 too Many](#) [FGM]

[Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development \(ACTED\)](#)

[Aegis Trust](#)

[Africa Center for Strategic Studies](#)

[African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes \(ACCORD\)](#)

[African Studies Centre Leiden](#)

[Amnesty International](#) [DRC specific page]

[Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project \(ACLED\)](#)
[Article 19 \[Freedom of expression and information\]](#)
[Assessment Capacities Project \(ACAPS\) \[DRC specific page\]](#)
[Association for the Prevention of Torture](#)
[Atlantic Council](#)
[Atlas of Torture](#)
[Brookings Institution](#)
[Care International](#)
[Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)
[Centre for Security Governance](#)
[Centre for Strategic and International Studies](#)
[Child Rights International Network \[DRC specific page\]](#)
[Child Soldiers World Index](#)
[CIA World Factbook \[DRC specific page\]](#)
[Combating Terrorism Center](#)
[Committee to Protect Journalists \[DRC specific page\]](#)
[Conciliation Resources](#)
[Council on Foreign Relations](#)
[Congo Forum \[French\]](#)
[Congo Research Group](#)
[Death Penalty Worldwide \(Cornell Law School\)](#)
[The Economist Intelligence Unit \[DRC specific page\]](#)
[Eldis](#)
[Enough Project \[DRC specific page\]](#)
[Foreign Affairs \(published by Council on Foreign Relations\) \[DRC specific page\]](#)
[Freedom House – Freedom in the World 2019 \[DRC specific page\]](#)
[Fund for Peace – Fragile States Index 2019](#)
[Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack](#)
[GlobalSecurity.org](#)
[Governance Social Development Humanitarian Conflict \(GSDRC\)](#)
[Group for Research and Information on Peace and Security \(Grip\)](#)
[Hands off Cain](#)
[Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research](#)
[Hot Peach Pages \[DV\]](#)
[Humanitarian Response \[DRC specific page\]](#)
[Human Rights Watch \[DRC specific page\]](#)
[Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada](#)
[Insecurity Insight \(DRC specific page\)](#)
[Institute for Economics & Peace – Global Peace Index 2019](#)
[Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa](#)
[Institute for the Study of War](#)
[Institute for War and Peace Reporting](#)
[Inter-African Committees on Traditional Practices](#)
[Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(IDMC\) \[DRC specific page\]](#)
[International Alert \[DRC specific page\]](#)
[International Bar Association](#)
[International Center for Not-for-Profit Law \[DRC specific page\]](#)
[International Centre for Prison Studies](#)
[International Commission of Jurists](#)
[International Committee of the Red Cross \(ICRC\)](#)
[International Crisis Group \[DRC specific page\]](#)

[International Federation for Human Rights \[Africa pages\]](#)
[International Federation of Journalists](#)
[International Freedom of Expression Exchange](#)
[International Institute for Strategic Studies](#)
[International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#)
[International Refugee Rights Initiative](#)
[International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims](#)
[International Rescue Committee](#)
[IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification](#)
[IPI Global Observatory](#)
[Jamestown Foundation](#)
[Kivu Security Tracker](#)
[Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor](#)
[La Voix des Sans-Voix pour les droits de l'homme](#)
[Long War Journal](#)
[Lutte pour le Changement \(LUCHA\)](#)
[Medecins Sans Frontieres/Doctors Without Borders \[DRC specific page\]](#)
[Minority Rights Group International](#)
[Minorities at Risk Project](#)
[National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism \(START\) – Global Terrorism Database \(GTD\)](#)
[Oakland Institute](#)
[L'Observatoire de la liberte de la presse en Afrique \(OLPA\)](#)
[OECD's Social Institutions & Gender Index](#)
[Open Society Foundations](#)
[Orchid Project \[FGM\]](#)
[Organization for Refuge, Asylum & Migration \(ORAM\)](#)
[Overseas Development Institute \(ODI\)](#)
[Oxfam](#)
[Peace Women](#)
[Penal Reform International](#)
[Physicians for Human Rights](#)
<https://rsf.org/en/news/threat-drc-journalists-who-cover-measures-combat-ebola>
[Reporters Without Borders](#)
[Rift Valley Institute](#)
[Right to Education](#)
[The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative](#)
[Saferworld](#)
[Save the Children](#)
[Security Council Report \[DRC specific page\]](#)
[Societe Civile en RDC](#)
[Small Arms Survey](#)
[Transparency International](#)
[UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office – Human Rights and Democracy Report 2019](#)
[United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#)
[United Nations Committee Against Torture](#)
[United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)
[United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women](#)
[United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances](#)
[United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child](#)
[United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\) \[DRC specific page\]](#)

[United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees \(UNHCR\)](#)
[United Nations Human Rights Council](#)
[United Nations Human Settlements Programme \(UNHABITAT\)](#)
[United Nations News Centre](#)
[United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(UNOCHA\)](#) [DRC specific page]
[United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#)
[United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict](#)
[United Nations Population Fund \(UNPFPA\)](#)
[United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime \(UNODC\)](#)
[United Nations Secretary General](#)
[United Nations Women](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to education](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children](#)
[United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences](#)
[United Nations World Food Programme \(WFP\)](#) [Publications]
[United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo](#)
[United States Institute of Peace](#)
[United States Congressional Research Service](#)
[United States Department of State](#) [Annual human rights report; child labour report; annual terrorism report; trafficking report]
[Uppsala Universitet – UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia](#)
[War Child](#)
[Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict](#)
[Women News Network \(WNN\)](#)
[Women's Refugee Commission](#)
[World Bank](#) [DRC specific page]
[World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) [DRC specific page]
[World Organisation Against Torture](#)
[World Prison Brief](#)

List of acronyms

ACAPS	Assessment Capacities Project
ACLED	The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
ADF	<i>Forces démocratiques alliées</i> [Allied Democratic Forces]
ANR	<i>Agence nationale de renseignements</i> [National Intelligence Agency]
APCLS	<i>Alliance des Patriotes pour un Congo Libre et Souverain</i> [Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo]
CACH	<i>Cap pour le changement</i> [Cap for change]
CLSP	<i>Comités locaux pour la sécurité de proximité</i> [Local committees for neighbourhood security]
CMC	Collective of Movements for Change
CNPSC	<i>Conseil Nationale du Peuple pour la Souveraineté du Congo</i> [National People's Coalition for the Sovereignty of Congo]
CNRD	<i>Conseil National pour le Renouveau et la Démocratie</i> [National Council for Renewal and Democracy]
CODECO	<i>Coopérative pour le développement au Congo</i> [Cooperative for Development of Congo]
DGM	General Directorate of Migration
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECDC	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
ETC	Ebola Treatment Centre
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
FARDC	<i>Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i> [Armed Forces of the Front Commun pour le Congo]
FCC	<i>Front Commun pour le Congo</i> [Common Front for Congo]
FDLR	<i>Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda</i> [Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda]
FDP	<i>Forces de défense du peuple</i>
FEWS Net	Famine Early Warning System Network
FNI	<i>Front des Nationalistes Intégrationnistes</i> [Nationalist and Integrationist Front]
FNL	<i>Forces Nationales de Liberation</i> [National Forces of Liberation]
FOREBU	<i>Forces républicaines du Burundi</i> [Republican Forces of Burundi]
FPIC	<i>Force patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo</i> [Patriotic and Integrationist Forces for the Liberation of Congo]
FPLC	<i>Forces Patriotiques pour la Libération du Congo</i> [Patriotic Forces for the Liberation of Congo]
FRPI	<i>Force de Résistance Patriotique de l'Ituri</i> [Front for Patriotic Resistance in Ituri]
IC	<i>Informateurs clés</i> [Key informants]
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISCAP	Islamic State Central Africa Province
ISIL/ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
JED	Journalist in Danger
KST	Kivu Security Tracker
LNI	<i>Légion nationale d'intervention</i>
LUCHA	<i>Lutte Pour Le Changement</i> [Struggle for Change]
M23	<i>Mouvement du 23 Mars</i> [March 23 Movement]

MLC	Movement for the Liberation of Congo
MONUC	UN Organization Mission in Democratic Republic of the Congo
MONUSCO	<i>Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en République Démocratique du Congo</i> [UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo]
MSF	<i>Médecins Sans Frontières</i> [Doctors Without Borders]
MTM	Madina at Tawhid Wai Muwahedeen or City of Monotheism and Monotheists
NALU	National Army for the Liberation of Uganda
NDC (-R)	<i>Nduma défense du Congo (-Rénové)</i> [Nduma Defence of Congo-(Renewed)]
OCV	Oral Cholera Vaccine
OFPRA	<i>Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides</i> [French Asylum Office]
OLPA	<i>Observatoire de la liberté de la presse en Afrique</i> [Observatory of the Freedom of Press in Africa]
OMCT	<i>Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture</i> [World Organization Against Torture]
PNC	<i>Police Nationale Congolaise</i> [Congolese National Police]
RDC	Congolese Rally for Democracy
RNC	Rwanda National Congress
RPG	Rocket Propelled Grenade
RSF	<i>Reporters Sans Frontières</i> [Reporters Without Borders]
UN	United Nations
UNJHRO	United Nations Joint Human Rights Office
UNOCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USN	<i>Union sacrée de la nation</i> [Sacred Union of the Nation]
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

1. Maps of North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri Regions

The CongoForum published a useful map, produced it appears by the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in 2002, showing **North and South Kivu** in great detail.¹ The map can be accessed [here](#).

The Logistics Cluster of the World Food Programme created a map in January 2019 of **North Kivu** (showing the main highways in the DRC and current road works), which can be accessed [here](#).²

In October 2019, the Logistics Cluster of the World Food Programme created a map of **South Kivu** (showing “logistics gaps or bottleneck” for overland transport), which due to its size is best viewed in its original format [here](#).³

The same source also produced a map of **Ituri** in January 2019 (showing current humanitarian access constraints and travel times), which can be viewed [here](#).⁴

The International Crisis Group report of July 2020 on the conflict in **Ituri** included in Appendix A a map of Ituri, which also shows the territories of Ituri.⁵

2. Political situation in the DRC: An Overview

According to the UN Secretary-General’s report covering major events and developments between 29 June and 25 September 2019, “The political situation during the reporting period was dominated by the inauguration of a coalition government under the Prime Minister, Sylvestre Ilunga Ilunkamba, in September [2019]”.⁶

During the same time and in relation to Ituri, the same report highlighted that “The signature of a peace agreement between the Government and FRPI [Force de résistance patriotique de l’Ituri] is expected to take place later” in 2019 and “In his public address in Bunia on 30 June [2019], President Tshisekedi committed to restoring peace in Ituri and holding perpetrators of human rights violations accountable”.⁷

The UN stated the following with regards to the peace process between the Congolese government and the FRPI in January/February 2020:

Further progress was made in the negotiations between the Government and the Force de résistance patriotique de l’Ituri (FRPI). An important milestone was reached on 10 January [2020], when the Council of Ministers endorsed the peace agreement. On 28 February [2020],

¹ See CongoForum, [Kivu Map First draft](#), 7 November 2002

² See World Food Programme, Logistics Cluster, [Republique democratique du Congo – Province du Nord Kivu, Carte des Chantiers Routiers](#), 31 January 2019

³ See World Food Programme, Logistics Cluster, [Republique democratique du Congo – Sud Kivu et Maniema](#), 25 September 2019

⁴ See World Food Programme, Logistics Cluster, [Republique democratique du Congo – Ituri, Contraintes d’accès et temps de trajet](#), 30 January 2019

⁵ International Crisis Group, [DR Congo: Ending the Cycle of Violence in Ituri](#), 15 July 2020, Appendix A

⁶ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 27 September 2019, para. 2

⁷ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 27 September 2019, paras. 25 and 26

the Government and FRPI ceremonially signed the peace agreement, bringing to end two decades of violent conflict in Irumu territory. Previously, there had been growing concerns regarding the actions of rogue FRPI members, who had reportedly been committing exactions against civilians, stressing the urgency of successfully concluding the demobilization process after months of the pre-cantonment of more than 1,200 FRPI combatants.⁸

Reporting on developments in the DRC between 29 September and 25 November 2019, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

Following the inauguration of the new Government, political life has centred around parliamentary processes and the discussion about the national budget. While the governing coalition has remained stable in both the executive and the legislative branches, party politics have resurfaced in public statements. At the international level, exchanges continue on a proposed regional coalition against armed groups in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as on the potential re-engagement of the international financial institutions in the country.⁹

Reporting on developments in the DRC between 26 November 2019 and 16 March 2020, the UN Secretary-General noted:

The coalition Government between the *Cap pour le changement* and the *Front commun pour le Congo* remained relatively stable and took pragmatic actions, resulting in, notably, the timely approval of the 2020 State budget. Nevertheless, a number of high-profile public statements continued to signal underlying tensions.

While some political actors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo accused neighbouring countries of plans to undermine national unity, President Félix Tshisekedi continued to be actively engaged in efforts to improve the political climate in the Great Lakes Region.¹⁰

With special mention of the Ituri province, the same report noted:

At the provincial level, most legislative assemblies adopted their 2020 budgets before the closure of their second ordinary sessions, in December [2019]. Nevertheless, tensions flared within the provincial institutions in [...] Ituri [...] where impeachment procedures were initiated by the Provincial Assemblies against their respective Governors. In response, the Government convened an interministerial commission on 14 January [2020], attended by the Governors, Vice-Governors and provincial assembly Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the provinces in question. Meanwhile, the Constitutional Court ruled on the case of the deposed Governor of Ituri, Jean Bamanisa Saïdi, reinstating him on procedural grounds.¹¹

The report further highlighted with regards to the peace process in Ituri province:

Further progress was made in the negotiations between the Government and the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI). An important milestone was reached on 10 January [2020], when the Council of Ministers endorsed the peace agreement. On 28 February [2020], the Government and FRPI ceremonially signed the peace agreement, bringing to end two decades of violent conflict in Irumu territory. Previously, there had been growing concerns

⁸ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 18 March 2020, para. 21

⁹ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 26 November 2019, para. 2

¹⁰ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 18 March 2020, para. 2

¹¹ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 18 March 2020, para. 7

regarding the actions of rogue FRPI members, who had reportedly been committing exactions against civilians, stressing the urgency of successfully concluding the demobilization process after months of the pre-cantonment of more than 1,200 FRPI combatants.¹²

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 17 March and 16 June 2020: "The reporting period was marked by the dynamics of the coalition between the Cap pour le changement and the Front commun pour le Congo, against the backdrop of efforts to contain the impact of COVID-19 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the detention of the Chief of Staff of the President on embezzlement charges. Diplomatic activities were also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with major regional meetings, such as the tenth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, postponed".¹³

Describing the situation in the DRC between 17 June and 18 September 2020, the UN Secretary-General noted in his report that "Political dynamics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the period under review were marked by continuing tensions within the ruling Cap pour le changement (CACH)-Front commun pour le Congo (FCC) coalition, discussions over nominations to key judicial and electoral bodies and calls among some opposition and civil society actors for a dialogue on electoral reforms".¹⁴

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 19 September and 1 December 2020: "Political dynamics were marked by persistent tensions within the ruling Cap pour le changement (CACH)-Front commun pour le Congo (FCC) coalition concerning nominations to key positions in the military and the judiciary, in particular the swearing-in of three judges to the Constitutional Court appointed by the President, Félix Tshilombo Tshisekedi, on 17 July [2020]".¹⁵

Covering the period 16 September 2020 to 15 March 2021 a UN Secretary-General report stated:

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, following tensions within the ruling Front commun pour le Congo-Cap pour le changement coalition, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Félix Tshisekedi, decided to end the coalition and establish a new parliamentary majority known as Union sacrée de la Nation. On 14 February [2021], Mr. Tshisekedi appointed Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde Kyenge as Prime Minister, replacing Sylvestre Ilunga Ilukamba, who had resigned on 29 January [2021] following a vote of no-confidence.¹⁶

Similarly, reporting on developments in the DRC between 2 December 2020 and 18 March 2021, the UN Secretary-General report stated that "Political dynamics were driven by the decision of the President, Félix Tshisekedi, to put an end to the ruling Cap pour le changement

¹² UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 18 March 2020, para. 21

¹³ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 18 June 2020, para. 2

¹⁴ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 21 September 2020, para. 2

¹⁵ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 30 November 2020, para. 2

¹⁶ UN Security Council, [*Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region*](#), 30 March 2021, para. 17

(CACH)-Front commun pour le Congo (FCC) coalition and to establish a new coalition by the name of Union sacrée de la nation (USN)".¹⁷

On 14th February 2021 Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde Kyenge, of Avenir du Congo, was appointed Prime Minister.¹⁸

Onesphore Sematumba, analyst on the DRC and Burundi with the International Crisis Group stated in May 2021:

The 26 April investiture of President Félix Tshisekedi's new parliamentary majority, known as the Sacred Union, marks the end of a long period in which the president remained under the strong influence of his predecessor, Joseph Kabila. Prime Minister Sama Lukonde presented his new team on 12 April and parliament endorsed it almost unanimously (with 410 of the 412 deputies present voting in favour), despite tensions over the division of ministerial posts. The new government gives Tshisekedi the freedom to push ahead with his reform program during the remainder of his five-year term in office.¹⁹

When asked 'will this government be able to cope with violence in the eastern DRC?', Sematumba replied:

As Tshisekedi said after receiving the deputies on 24 April, the government's "top priority" is to put an end to violence in eastern DR Congo. Since the beginning of April, the population in the east has been protesting the ineffective presence of UN peacekeepers and the Congolese army amid massacres and other violence by armed groups. In North Kivu, where Uganda's Allied Democratic Forces are generally believed to be responsible for atrocities, people are increasingly defiant of the central government. In Ituri, after a period of relative calm, supporters of the Cooperative for the Development of the Congo launched a new round of attacks on the civilian population. In South Kivu, local Mai-Mai militia groups and rebels from other countries such as Burundians in the Résistance pour le droit au Burundi (RED-Tabara) are targeting civilians in the high plateau around Uvira [...]

Tshisekedi has so far responded to the security challenges in eastern DRC by using force. His announcement of a state of siege in the North Kivu and Ituri provinces on 1 May – imposing martial law – has shown this once again. Yet his army has achieved only limited success on the ground. Both in North Kivu and in Ituri, armed groups have been remarkably quick to reoccupy positions previously lost to the army.²⁰

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 19 March and 18 June 2021, "The period under review was marked by the formation of the Union sacrée de la nation (USN) Government and the declaration of a state of siege in Ituri and North Kivu Provinces".²¹ The same source further explained:

On 3 May [2021], the President signed two ordinances instituting a state of siege in Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, effective from 6 May for an initial period of 30 days, with the possibility of extension for 15-day periods. On 7 May [2021], the Constitutional Court ruled that the ordinances were in line with the Constitution. On 3 and 4 June [2021], respectively, the National Assembly and the Senate approved the first extension of the state of siege. [...]

¹⁷ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 2

¹⁸ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 8

¹⁹ Sematumba, O., [DR Congo: No Grace Period for the New Government](#), 5 May 2021

²⁰ Sematumba, O., [DR Congo: No Grace Period for the New Government](#), 5 May 2021

²¹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 June 2021, para. 2

As an exceptional and temporary measure, the civilian authorities of Ituri and North Kivu have been replaced by a military governor and a police vice-governor during the state of siege. The provincial governments and assemblies have been suspended in both provinces, but provincial public servants continue to operate. The military and police authorities have been granted increased powers over arrests and searches; regulation of movement and freedom of expression and assembly; and enforcement of public order and decision-making. In addition, the military courts have taken over responsibility for criminal prosecutions from civilian courts. Importantly, certain fundamental rights and freedoms, including the right to life and freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, cannot be derogated from.²²

In May 2021, International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch reported that "Amid ongoing violence in east, authorities started implementing "state of siege" in North Kivu and Ituri provinces as military took over from civil authorities. As part of "state of siege" in east, President Tshisekedi 4 May ordered military and police officers to take over from civilian authorities in North Kivu and Ituri provinces starting 6 May for initial period of 30 days; in controversial move, appointed Lt Gen Constant Ndima as North Kivu governor, despite UN accusation that he committed serious crimes in Ituri during 1999-2003 war, and Lt Gen Jon Luboya, former intelligence commander of Rwanda-backed Congolese Rally for Democracy, as governor of Ituri".²³

Human Rights Watch's Senior Researcher, Thomas Fessy, further explained that:

Under the martial law orders, military authorities are now able to search people's homes day and night, ban publications and meetings deemed against public order, restrict people's movements, and arrest anyone for disrupting public order. Civilians will be prosecuted – contrary to regional standards – before military courts. Despite reassurances from the army's spokesman that international human rights and humanitarian law will be respected, military rule puts a wide range of rights in jeopardy.

The new military provincial governors only heighten concerns over human rights and civilian protection. North Kivu's governor, Lt. Gen. Constant Ndima, better known as "Effacer le Tableau" ("erase the board"), earned his nickname from an abusive operation he allegedly led as a rebel commander with the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) in Ituri province in 2002. In Ituri, Lt. Gen. Johnny Luboya, a former rebel chief of military intelligence with the Rwanda-backed Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD-Goma), may bear command responsibility for killings, rapes, and other abuses by his forces, according to an internal United Nations memo seen by Human Rights Watch.²⁴

The Kivu Security Tracker found that since the announcement "the number of civilians killed [in those two provinces] markedly increased" in May 2021.²⁵

Accountability for past human rights violations

Amnesty International, reporting on the first year in office of President Tshisekedi, noted:

²² UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 June 2021, paras. 6 and 7

²³ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch](#), Undated [Last accessed: 7 July 2021 with filters August 2019-July 2021 and DRC]

²⁴ Human Rights Watch, [Martial Law in Eastern Congo No Pretext for Abuse](#), 7 May 2021

²⁵ Kivu Security Tracker, [Uptick in killings after state of siege announced, monthly report No 43 – May 2021](#), May 2021

In a shocking statement, President Tshisekedi declared in September 2019 that he had “no time to rummage into the past” and hold suspected perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses accountable.

Not surprisingly, impunity has reigned over the past 12 months, with barely a handful of investigations and trials on human rights violations and abuses.²⁶

In early November 2019:

The International Criminal Court (ICC) [...] handed down a maximum 30-year prison sentence for mass murder and numerous other atrocities, to Bosco Ntaganda, the heaviest sanction yet imposed by judges at The Hague, in the Netherlands. Known as “The Terminator”, the former warlord was found guilty “beyond reasonable doubt” of war crimes and crimes against humanity in attacks on villages in Ituri province, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), in 2002 and 2003. As former Deputy Chief of Staff and commander of operations of the Forces Patriotiques pour la Libération du Congo (FPLC), Mr. Ntaganda was implicated in murder, rape, sexual slavery and the forced displacement of Lendu communities from gold-rich areas. In addition, Mr. Ntaganda was convicted of conscripting and enlisting children under the age of 15, of using them to fight in the vast resource-rich country’s eastern regions, bordering Rwanda and Uganda. Finally, the militia leader was also found guilty of the rape of some of these youngsters and of exploiting others as sex slaves”.²⁷

Reporting on developments in the DRC between 26 November 2019 and 16 March 2020, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

Supporting civilian and military justice authorities in the fight against impunity remained a priority task. In 2019, approximately 133 FARDC soldiers, 113 national police and 59 members of armed groups were convicted for human rights violations and abuses. On 19 November 2019, armed group leader Masudi Alimasi Kokodikoko was convicted for crimes against humanity committed in South Kivu in 2018 and was sentenced to life imprisonment [...]. The Mission [MONUSCO] also supported judicial authorities in their investigations of the attacks against Ebola Response Teams and facilities. However, some high-ranking active officers in the security forces, with credible allegations of violations of human rights law against them, have not yet been investigated.²⁸

Covering the period 16 September 2020 to 15 March 2021 a UN Secretary-General report stated:

With regard to accountability for grave human rights violations, some trials resulted in landmark judgments against perpetrators of serious crimes. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 23 November [2020], the former leader of the armed group Nduma défense du Congo, Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, was sentenced to life in prison for war crimes, including murder, rape, sexual slavery, and child recruitment, by a military court. Sheka was convicted together with the FDLR leader, Séraphin Nzitonda Habimana (alias Lionceau). On 4 December [2020], leader of the Rassemblement congolais pour la Démocratie-National, Roger Lumbala, was arrested in Paris on charges of complicity in crimes against humanity related to his 2002 actions in Ituri province.²⁹

²⁶ Amnesty International, [*DRC: One year since Tshisekedi took office, insecurity and impunity still imperil human rights*](#), 24 January 2020

²⁷ UN News, [*‘Terminator’ warlord Bosco Ntaganda sentenced to 30 years in prison for DR Congo atrocities*](#), 7 November 2019

²⁸ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 18 March 2020, para. 45

²⁹ UN Security Council, [*Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region*](#), 30 March 2021, para. 31

Reporting on the human rights situation between 2 December 2020 and 18 March 2021, the UN Secretary-General report stated that:

On 12 January [2021], the garrison military court of Bukavu sentenced Takungomo Mukambilwa Le Pouce, a deputy to the leader of Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki Charlequin, to 20 years in prison for crimes against humanity, including murder, rape, torture, sexual slavery and enforced disappearance, and to the payment of damages to victims, which is enforceable through the seizure of all of his property. The courts also ordered that the victims be enabled to return to their villages [...]

MONUSCO also supported the military judicial authorities in investigations into allegations of serious crimes committed in 2019 and 2020 by FARDC in Djugu territory in Ituri. One of the cases includes Major Patrick, also known as Sandoka, who is accused of the murder of at least 13 people and the disappearance of 9 others in Gudji. A provisional arrest warrant against him was issued on 6 January.³⁰

In June 2021, International Crisis group's *CrisisWatch* reported that "Amid ongoing political tensions, President Tshisekedi visited eastern region apologising for past human rights violations and criticising role of army and other institutions. Tshisekedi 12 June [2021] toured eastern provinces, which have been under martial law since late April, asked local population for forgiveness for human rights violations committed by security forces and armed groups and promised to prosecute those responsible for abuses; 20 June [2021] described army as "mafia" and denounced senators who 15 June [2021] voted against lifting immunity of Senator Augustin Matata Ponyo, PM under former President Kabila, accused of embezzlement of public funds".³¹

3. National Security Forces and the International Peacekeeping Mission

3.1. National Police (*Police nationale congolaise*, PNC)

For information on the human rights violations committed by the PNC see sections [6. Overview of the Security Situation, including conflict-related human rights violations](#), [7. Human Rights Situation – Civil and Political Rights](#), [8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#), and [9.1. Recruitment and use of child soldiers](#).

The U.S. Department of State's annual report on human rights, covering 2020, reported that "The primary responsibility for law enforcement and public order lies with the Congolese National Police, which operates under the Ministry of the Interior".³²

The U.S. Department of State's annual report on Terrorism, covering 2019, reported with regards to the efficiency of the PNC to combat terrorism and secure its borders:

Since 2010, the Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) has trained roughly 900 border officers from the National Police's (PNC's) Direction Centrale de la Police des Frontieres Congolaise (Central Border Police Directorate), which oversees security and surveillance activities at border crossings. High turnover rates prevalent throughout the PNC resulted in few INL-trained officers remaining with border units. The PNC anti-riot unit,

³⁰ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, paras. 27 and 28

³¹ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch](#), Undated [Last accessed: 7 July 2021 with filters August 2019-July 2021 and DRC]

³² U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Executive Summary

the Légion Nationale d'Intervention, has a designated CT squad, which has limited staff and receives no specialized training or equipment.³³

In July 2020, OHCHR-MONUSCO released a report covering “violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by combatants of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and members of the defense and security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Beni territory, North Kivu province and in Irumu and Mambasa territories, Ituri province, between 1 January 2019 and 31 January 2020.”³⁴ With regards to the Congolese national police, the report found:

Soldiers of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and agents of the Police nationale congolaise (PNC) also committed human rights violations, in particular in the context of military operations against the ADF launched in October 2019, including violations of the rights to life, physical integrity, liberty and security of the person and property [...]

In addition to attacks against civilians by the ADF, the UNJHRO documented numerous violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the context of military operations against the ADF by the defense and security forces. The UNJHRO documented cases involving 109 victims of human rights violations committed by FARDC soldiers and cases involving 137 victims of human rights violations committed by PNC agents, including members of the Légion nationale d'intervention (LNI).³⁵

3.2. Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC)

For information on the human rights violations committed by the PNC see sections [6. Overview of the Security Situation, including conflict-related human rights violations](#), [7. Human Rights Situation – Civil and Political Rights](#), [8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#), and [9.1. Recruitment and use of child soldiers](#).

The Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) World Factbook provided the following background on FARDC:

the modern FARDC was created out of the armed factions of the two Congo wars of 1996-1997 and 1998-2003; as part of the peace accords that ended the last war, the largest rebel groups were incorporated into the FARDC; many armed groups (at least 70 and by some recent estimates more than 100), however, continue to fight; as of late 2020, the FARDC was actively engaged in combat operations against numerous armed groups inside the country, particularly in the eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu, although violence also continues in Maniema, Kasai, Kasai Central, and Tanganyika provinces; the military is widely assessed as being unable to provide adequate security throughout the country due to insufficient training,

³³ U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Terrorism 2019, Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 24 June 2020

³⁴ OHCHR-MONUSCO, [Report on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the Allied Democratic Forces armed group and by members of the defense and security forces in Beni territory, North Kivu province and Irumu and Mambasa territories, Ituri province, between 1 January 2019 and 31 January 2020](#), July 2020

³⁵ OHCHR-MONUSCO, [Report on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the Allied Democratic Forces armed group and by members of the defense and security forces in Beni territory, North Kivu province and Irumu and Mambasa territories, Ituri province, between 1 January 2019 and 31 January 2020](#), July 2020, p. 4/5

poor morale and leadership, ill-discipline and corruption, low equipment readiness, a fractious ethnic makeup, and the sheer size of the country and diversity of armed rebel groups.³⁶

With regards to FARDC's size it noted:

size estimates for the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) vary widely because of inconsistent and unreliable data, as well as the ongoing integration of various non-state armed groups/militias; approximately 100,000 active troops (mostly Army, but includes several thousand Navy and Air Force personnel, as well as about 10,000 Republican Guard; note - Navy personnel includes naval infantry (2020)).³⁷

The U.S. Department of State's annual report on human rights, covering 2020, reported that "The Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the military intelligence service operate under the control of the Ministry of Defense and are primarily responsible for external security but in reality focus almost exclusively on internal security".³⁸

The source further noted with regards to human rights that "Civilian authorities did not always maintain control over the security forces. Members of the security forces committed numerous abuses".³⁹

In its September 2019 report the Africa Center for Strategic Studies noted that:

[...] For many combatants, integration into the armed forces remains a key demand and a possible motive for joining an armed group.³² Most of the armed groups have developed into semi-criminal gangs exploiting natural resources and exerting considerable pressure over local people through taxation. They have very little popular legitimacy [...]
As for the combatants, of the 1000 combatants who joined the DDR process in Kivu in the early months of 2019, 300 decided to join the FARDC.³⁴ [...]

³² Of the 1200 combatants who have joined DDR schemes since the start of 2019, more than 350 opted for FARDC integration. These were moved to a FARDC training camp in Kongo Central Province. Interview with MONUSCO official, Bukavu, 28 June 2019. [...]

³⁴ Interview, MONUSCO DDRRR official, Bukavu, 28 June 2019. [...].⁴⁰

The Group of Experts on the DRC, as mandated by a UN Security Council resolution, reported in its report covering November 2019 to 25 April 2020:

significant changes in the command structures of Congolese security forces during this period, with the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC)) pursuing simultaneous operations against armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law remained widespread in that area.
The Group found that FARDC operations scattered and weakened a number of those armed groups, including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Conseil national pour le renouveau

³⁶ CIA, [The World Factbook: Congo, Democratic Republic of the](#), Last updated: 30 June 2021 [Last accessed: 7 July 2021]

³⁷ CIA, [The World Factbook: Congo, Democratic Republic of the](#), Last updated: 30 June 2021 [Last accessed: 7 July 2021]

³⁸ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, *Executive Summary*

³⁹ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, *Executive Summary*

⁴⁰ Africa Center for Strategic Studies, [Securing Legitimate Stability in the DRC: External Assumptions and Local Perspectives](#), 30 September 2019

et la démocratie (CNRD), the armed branch of the Rwanda National Congress (RNC), known as P5, and the Mai-Mai Malaika.⁴¹

In July 2020, OHCHR-MONUSCO released a report covering “violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by combatants of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and members of the defense and security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Beni territory, North Kivu province and in Irumu and Mambasa territories, Ituri province, between 1 January 2019 and 31 January 2020.”⁴² With regards to the Congolese national police, the report found:

Soldiers of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and agents of the Police nationale congolaise (PNC) also committed human rights violations, in particular in the context of military operations against the ADF launched in October 2019, including violations of the rights to life, physical integrity, liberty and security of the person and property [...]

In addition to attacks against civilians by the ADF, the UNJHRO documented numerous violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the context of military operations against the ADF by the defense and security forces. The UNJHRO documented cases involving 109 victims of human rights violations committed by FARDC soldiers and cases involving 137 victims of human rights violations committed by PNC agents, including members of the Légion nationale d’intervention (LNI).⁴³

3.3. UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)

According to MONUSCO’s own website:

MONUSCO took over from an earlier UN peacekeeping operation – the United Nations Organization Mission in Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) – on 1 July 2010. It was done in accordance with Security Council resolution 1925 of 28 May [2010] to reflect the new phase reached in the country.

The new mission has been authorized to use all necessary means to carry out its mandate relating, among other things, to the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel and human rights defenders under imminent threat of physical violence and to support the Government of the DRC in its stabilization and peace consolidation efforts.⁴⁴

The Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) World Factbook provided the following background on MONUSCO:

MONUSCO, the United Nations peacekeeping and stabilization force in the Democratic Republic of Congo, has operated in the central and eastern parts of the country since 1999; as

⁴¹ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 2 June 2020, *Summary*

⁴² OHCHR-MONUSCO, [Report on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the Allied Democratic Forces armed group and by members of the defense and security forces in Beni territory, North Kivu province and Irumu and Mambasa territories, Ituri province, between 1 January 2019 and 31 January 2020](#), July 2020

⁴³ OHCHR-MONUSCO, [Report on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the Allied Democratic Forces armed group and by members of the defense and security forces in Beni territory, North Kivu province and Irumu and Mambasa territories, Ituri province, between 1 January 2019 and 31 January 2020](#), July 2020, p. 4/5

⁴⁴ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), [About](#), Undated [Last accessed: 28 May 2021]

of January 2021, MONUSCO comprised around 17,500 personnel, including about 12,500 military troops and 1,400 police; MONUSCO includes a Force Intervention Brigade (FIB; 3 infantry battalions), the first ever UN peacekeeping force specifically tasked to carry out targeted offensive operations to neutralize and disarm groups considered a threat to state authority and civilian security.⁴⁵

Human Rights Watch noted in its annual report covering 2019 that “[...] In March [2019], the Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution extending the mandate of MONUSCO for nine months and called for an independent strategic review of the mission [...]”.⁴⁶

In its September 2019 report the Africa Center for Strategic Studies noted that:

[...] MONUSCO has seen its footprint reduced in recent years and an independent strategic review of the mission is under way. Local UN staff and the wider international presence are focused on this review, which will inform the thinking of the United Nations Secretariat in New York and will be an important consideration for the UN Security Council. At the same time, President Felix Tshisekedi, who assumed office on 24 January 2019, has recently stated that the mission should remain in place. This opens a new window of opportunity to support local dynamics of change.⁴⁷

Moreover, the report found that in South Kivu, and particularly in the four localities of Bushwira, Kanyola, Sange and Kipupu:

[...] In all four localities, the international presence in the form of MONUSCO or international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) is very limited, as is the presence of local civil society. [...] Despite its poor record of service delivery, the state remains central to popular aspirations in the fields of security, justice, basic service delivery and economic development. The surveys in South Kivu confirmed research findings that non-state actors, such as armed groups, are generally not considered good alternatives to the primary role of the state and state organs. Confidence in the security services, in particular the Armed Forces of the DRC (the FARDC) and the National Intelligence Agency (l’Agence nationale des renseignements, ANR), is quite low, but considerably higher than in non-state actors such as self-defence militias and armed groups, or in MONUSCO. In the words of a male trader from Rutanga, ‘MONUSCO can leave once peace has been established. For the moment, they consume a lot of money that the Congolese could use for their development and yet they do nothing to protect us’. [...] [...] MONUSCO, the United Nations Development Programme and other donors have tried to get decentralization off the ground but beyond lip-service, there has been little interest from the DRC state in proceeding with the organization of local elections, and thereby giving up one of its main vehicles for exerting control at the local level. [...] [...] MONUSCO supports the *Comités locaux pour la sécurité de proximité* (CLSP, local committees for neighborhood security), which are committees established by a government decree in 2013. This MONUSCO support is buttressed by *CORDAID* and *Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten* (VNG), and linked to MONUSCO community liaison assistants and Community Alert Networks. The CLSP are directly involved in the framework of local police projects. The CLSP establish local security plans. In the context of the proximity police projects ‘forums de quartiers’ (neighbourhood forums) have been created. The Catholic Church through its Peace and Justice Commission has set up local committees on participative governance. These monitor governance matters and discuss security issues. [...] There have been many national and international initiatives to coordinate the security response and contribute to a

⁴⁵ CIA, [The World Factbook: Congo, Democratic Republic of the](#), Last updated: 30 June 2021 [Last accessed: 7 July 2021]

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2020](#) [Events in 2019], 2020

⁴⁷ Africa Center for Strategic Studies, [Securing Legitimate Stability in the DRC: External Assumptions and Local Perspectives](#), 30 September 2019

dialogue between state representatives, civil society and the population in the security field [...]

MONUSCO is in the process of leaving numerous areas and whether any of the security initiatives put in place will survive remains to be seen. A general point of criticism of MONUSCO by the local population is that even where MONUSCO has a presence and is warned of an incident by an early warning network, reaction in time is highly unlikely. A state official from Rutanga stated: Personally I do not see what MONUSCO is doing. Its role is supposed to be to protect the people but we are dying in its presence; and when we ask for help, it reacts 30 minutes or an hour after the enemy has left [...]

[...] Despite the efforts of, among other things, Radio Okapi and MONUSCO's community liaison assistants, there is a severe lack of understanding among the people of the role of MONUSCO. There are at least two key issues. First, in the eyes of most Congolese, MONUSCO is completely identified with its military component: the civilian component is almost invisible. Second, the population has little or no understanding of the mission's mandate when it comes to the use of force. Despite some successes, MONUSCO is often seen as impotent—and this is reflected in numerous surveys. INGOs face a similar problem: if there is no direct personal gain, their presence is not considered useful. MONUSCO and INGOs have a very light footprint in all four of the areas studied. Expectations of INGOs are mostly oriented towards the construction of infrastructure and the provision of training, education and health care. [...] The MONUSCO presence is not popular. People express little confidence in it and do not want it to remain in the country in the long term.⁴⁸

The U.S. Department of State's annual report on human rights reported that in 2020, "Operational cooperation between MONUSCO and the government continued in the east. The MONUSCO Force Intervention Brigade supported FARDC troops in North Kivu and southern Ituri Provinces. MONUSCO forces deployed and conducted patrols to protect internally displaced persons from armed group attacks in North Kivu Province, southern Ituri Province, and South Kivu Province near Minembwe".⁴⁹

On 18th December 2020 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2556 "renewing MONUSCO's mandate for a year and, including, on an exceptional basis, its Intervention Brigade".⁵⁰ Accordingly, "MONUSCO will keep a maximum authorized strength of 14,000 military personnel, 660 military observers and staff officers, 591 police officers and 1,050 members of the formed police units. The Council approved the deployment, on a temporary basis, of an additional 360 members of the formed police units, to replace the military personnel".⁵¹ In January 2021 Ms Bintou Keita of Guinea was appointed as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the DRC and Head of MONUSCO, replacing Ms. Leila Zerrougui of Algeria.⁵²

4. Major Armed Groups in the Region

Useful search tools

⁴⁸ Africa Center for Strategic Studies, [Securing Legitimate Stability in the DRC: External Assumptions and Local Perspectives](#), 30 September 2019

⁴⁹ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 1. G., Abuses in internal conflict*

⁵⁰ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), [Mandate](#), Undated [Last accessed: 28 May 2021]

⁵¹ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), [Mandate](#), Undated [Last accessed: 28 May 2021]

⁵² UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), [Leadership](#), Undated [Last accessed: 28 May 2021]

For a short description of armed groups operating in the Kivus visit the webpage '[Armed groups](#)' of the [Kivu Security Tracker](#) - a useful tool developed jointly by the Congo Research Group and Human Rights Watch to "map violence by state security forces and armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo to better understand trends, causes of insecurity and serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law".⁵³ In October 2020, the Kivu Security Tracker created maps of Ituri, South Kivu and North Kivu showing non-state armed groups, which due to its size is best viewed in its original format [here](#). Note that the maps show areas of influence rather than absolute control.⁵⁴

The Uppsala Conflict Data Program facilitates "tailored research" based on actors involved in armed conflict.⁵⁵ For example, searching for 'CNPSC' results in various infographics depicting number of deaths, location of violence/fatalities within a given timeframe, and also often contains a summary about the specific armed group.⁵⁶ Search the database [here](#).⁵⁷

The Congolese Research Group produced a '[Map of Armed Groups in 2019](#)' which approximates the zones of influence of different armed groups in North Kivu as of November 2019 and produced a [report](#) detailing the interactions of armed groups in that province.⁵⁸

The Group of Experts on the DRC, as mandated by the UN Security Council, provided specific information on the *Collectif des mouvements pour le changement/Force de défense du peuple*, active in North Kivu, the *Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie (CNRD)*, and *P5*, active in Uvira territory and North Kivu, specifically its leadership, structure, network support, involvement in violent armed clashes between November 2019 and April 2020.⁵⁹ The same source reported in its report covering November 2020 to April 2021 on "clashes and shifting alliances of armed groups in Masis, Rushuru, southern Lubero and Walikale territories" as "Armed groups competed for control, especially since the vacuum left by the split of Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R)".⁶⁰ The same report also provided detailed information on the *Force patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo (FPIC)* and *Zaire*.⁶¹

For further information on the human rights violations committed by non-state armed groups see sections [6. Overview of the Security Situation, including conflict-related human rights violations](#), [8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#), and [9.1. Recruitment and use of child soldiers](#).

⁵³ Kivu Security Tracker, [About Us](#), Undated [Last accessed: 7 July 2021]

⁵⁴ Kivu Security Tracker, [The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo, Missed Opportunities, Perpetrated Insecurity and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies](#), February 2021

⁵⁵ See [Uppsala Conflict Data Program](#) produced by the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala Universitet, undated [Last accessed: 7 July 2021]

⁵⁶ See [Uppsala Conflict Data Program](#) produced by the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala Universitet, undated [Last accessed: 7 July 2021]

⁵⁷ See [Uppsala Conflict Data Program](#) produced by the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala Universitet, undated [Last accessed: 7 July 2021]

⁵⁸ Congolese Research Group, ["For the Army, With the Army, Like the Army?": Map of Armed Groups in 2019](#), 13 May 2020, p. 36

⁵⁹ See UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 2 June 2020, paras. 11-19, paras. 28-31 and paras. 52-58

⁶⁰ See UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 10 June 2021 and specifically paras. 44-56

⁶¹ See UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 10 June 2021, paras. 101-106 and 107-112

Also referring to human rights violations throughout 2020 as documented and confirmed by the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO), its analysis for the year found:

In 2020, the UNJHRO documented 7.909 human rights violations and abuses throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which represents an average of 659 human rights violations per month. This is a significant increase (+21%) compared to 2019 and a reversal of the trend of the previous year, which recorded a decrease of 4%. The figures recorded are higher than those documented during the election year (6,814 violations and abuses in 2018). This increase reflects a deterioration of the security situation in the provinces affected by armed conflict, in particular North Kivu, Ituri and South Kivu where the UNJHRO recorded a sharp increase of about 46% of the number of abuses committed by armed groups.

Djugu-based armed assailants in Ituri province, combatants of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), Nduma Defense of Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) and Nyatura in the province of North Kivu continued to attack civilians in their farms, homes and roads, expanding the geographic areas where they usually operate.⁶²

The same report further specified:

The most reported type of violations documented by UNJHRO in 2020 were violations of the right to physical integrity with 2,094 violations and 4,098 victims, including 1,162 women and 523 children, a slightly higher figure than that documented in 2019. Among these victims, at least 679 women, 285 children and three men were victims of sexual violence across the country. Violations of the right to property increased by 30% with 1,911 violations. Violations of the right to liberty and security of person (1,814 violations with 6,128 victims, including 950 women and 450 children) increased by 17% compared to 2019. There was a 14% increase in violations of the right to life with 1,665 violations and 3,684 victims, including 2,945 victims of extrajudicial and summary killings, including 553 women and 286 children. Finally, cases of forced labour increased by 43% with 80 violations and 648 victims [...]

Throughout the country, armed groups and militias were also responsible for an extremely high number of summary killings (with at least 2,487 victims, including 492 women and 251 children), which represents an increase of 142% compared to 2019 (1,029 victims, including 243 women and 73 children). ADF combatants are responsible for the majority of these executions (34%), mainly in Beni territory in the province of North Kivu but also in the territories of Irumu and Mambasa in Ituri, where they carried out particularly deadly attacks on civilians (849 victims, including 201 women and 26 children). These attacks reflect the intention of the ADF to spread terror in these areas in retaliation against FARDC military operations and to control the territories to carry out trafficking activities. Djugu-based assailants were also responsible for a very high number of summary killings (716 victims, including 129 women and 122 children), mainly in Djugu territory followed by the territories of Mahagi and Irumu in Ituri province [...]

Throughout the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, State agents were responsible for 45% of the human rights violations documented in 2020, whereas 55% were perpetrated by armed groups.⁶³

For a further break-down of the main non-state armed perpetrators of these violations see the report by the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, paras. 22-31.

Note that the below non-state armed groups/militias are just some of the approximately 130 groups found active in Eastern DRC.

⁶² UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, para. 2

⁶³ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, paras. 6, 7, 9 and 10

4.1. *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)*

The Kivu Security Tracker reported on the “weakened FDLR”:

[...] Between 2015 and mid-2020, the NDC-R emerged as the Kivus’ largest armed group in terms of territorial influence, with a vast track record of human rights violations. It also constituted a formidable threat to the weakened FDLR and most of the scattered Nyatura groups in Masisi and Rutshuru (in particular Dominique Ndaruhutse’s CMC, a fierce ally of the Rwandan rebels). Indirectly, military pressure by the NDC-R and the Congo’s and Rwanda’s armies contributed to the assassination of the FDLR’s historic commander, Sylvestre Mudacumura, as well as to the definitive dislodging of the CNRD toward South Kivu.⁶⁴

At the same time the same source noted that between June 2017 and October 2020 “Four armed groups – the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS), and the NDC-R – along with the national army account for over a third of all incidents and half of all civilians killed”.⁶⁵

On Masisi and Rutshuru territories, between 29 September and 25 November 2019, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

Frequent clashes between NDC-R and the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS), the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and Nyatura armed groups have further increased insecurity and led to the killing of at least 46 civilians, the rape of 18 women and the displacement of civilians. FARDC launched military operations against armed groups in Masisi on 6 October [2019]. While APCLS, FDLR and Nyatura appeared to be the initial targets, some clashes were also reported with NDC-R later in the month. In Rutshuru Territory, FDLR remains a major concern as it continued to carry out violations and exactions against civilians. On 10 November [2019], FARDC announced that Musabimana Juvenal, the leader of the FDLR splinter group Rassemblement pour l’unité et la démocratie-Urunana, had been killed in an operation.⁶⁶

Reporting on developments in 2020, the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research noted:

[...] The Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC) reportedly employed members of NDC-R to push the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and the National Council for Renewal and Democracy (CNRD) out of North and South Kivu [...] Although FDLR and CNRD activity significantly decreased, violent attacks continued, including frequent incidents of sexual violence. [...] Throughout the year, FARDC continued operations against FDLR and CNRD. [...] To combat FDLR and CNRD, FARDC reportedly employed members of the armed group Nduma Defence of Congo-Renovated (NDC-R) [...] as a proxy to push FDLR and CNRD out of North and South Kivu. While the NDC-R ran the bulk of fighting against FDLR allies, the FARDC launched a series of operations in North and South Kivu, allegedly involving small, rotating detachments of Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF) [...]

⁶⁴ Kivu Security Tracker, [*The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo: Missed Opportunities, Protracted Insecurity and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies*](#), 28 February 2021

⁶⁵ Kivu Security Tracker, [*The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo: Missed Opportunities, Protracted Insecurity and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies*](#), 28 February 2021

⁶⁶ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 26 November 2019, para. 15

Overall, FDLR [...] activity significantly decreased, mainly due to the ongoing military operation Sokola 2 by the Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC) and pressure from other armed groups.⁶⁷

Covering the period 16 September 2020 to 15 March 2021 a UN Secretary-General report stated:

With regard to accountability for grave human rights violations, some trials resulted in landmark judgments against perpetrators of serious crimes. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 23 November [2020], the former leader of the armed group Nduma défense du Congo, Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, was sentenced to life in prison for war crimes, including murder, rape, sexual slavery, and child recruitment, by a military court. Sheka was convicted together with the FDLR leader, Séraphin Nzitonda Habimana (alias Lionceau).⁶⁸

The same source further noted:

FARDC operations targeting a main stronghold of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) in Kazaroho, in North Kivu, further weakened the group. This development followed the killing or arrest of some leaders of Rwandan armed groups. FDLR-FOCA is believed, however, to have retained operational capacity and influence with local militias, as exemplified by an attack on 24 April by suspected FDLR elements in Virunga National Park, which killed 13 game park rangers and four civilians [...]

Meanwhile, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) were reportedly able to consolidate their recruitment and training activities, with reports of military training for new recruits taking place in southern Lubero and Rutshuru territories.⁶⁹

4.2. *Front des Nationalistes Intégrationnistes (FNI)*

The International Crisis Group reported in July 2020:

the [recent] violence spreading from Djugu territory [Ituri] is attributable to Lendu militiamen, some of whom came of age as part of the Nationalist and Integrationist Front (Front des Nationalistes Intégrationnistes, or FNI). The FNI is itself a former Lendu armed group based in the same territory, allied with the Front for Patriotic Resistance in Ituri (Force de Résistance Patriotique d'Ituri, or FRPI), a Lendu armed group based in Irumu, which took part in the Ituri war of 1999-2003.⁷⁰

4.3. *Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI)*

According to the UN Secretary-General's report, covering major events and developments between 29 June and 25 September 2019:

The demobilization process of the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) has advanced considerably since my previous report. On 12 August [2019], the Governor of Ituri Province

⁶⁷ Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, [Conflict Barometer 2020](#), 2021 [Analyzed Period: 01/01/20 – 12/31/20]

⁶⁸ UN Security Council, [Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region](#), 30 March 2021, para. 31

⁶⁹ UN Security Council, [Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region](#), 29 September 2020, paras. 10, 13-15 and 17

⁷⁰ International Crisis Group, [DR Congo: Ending the Cycle of Violence in Ituri](#), 15 July 2020

launched the pre-cantonment of FRPI combatants. This followed a visit by President Tshisekedi in July, which facilitated negotiations with the FRPI on a final agreement for their demobilization. To date, over 800 combatants have registered in the pre-cantonment site in Geti. The signature of a peace agreement between the Government and FRPI is expected to take place later in the year [2019].⁷¹

The UN stated the following with regards to the peace process between the Congolese government and the FRPI in January/February 2020:

Further progress was made in the negotiations between the Government and the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI). An important milestone was reached on 10 January [2020], when the Council of Ministers endorsed the peace agreement. On 28 February [2020], the Government and FRPI ceremonially signed the peace agreement, bringing to end two decades of violent conflict in Ituri territory. Previously, there had been growing concerns regarding the actions of rogue FRPI members, who had reportedly been committing exactions against civilians, stressing the urgency of successfully concluding the demobilization process after months of the pre-cantonment of more than 1,200 FRPI combatants.⁷²

Between 27 September and 3 October 2020, ACLED reported:

[...] Front for Patriotic Resistance of Ituri (FRPI) fighters clashed with Congolese military forces (FARDC), resulting in multiple fatalities. The clash came despite the group having signed a peace accord with the Congolese government in February [2020]. Under the terms of the agreement, FRPI was due to be disbanded, with willing ex-combatants integrated into the FARDC (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2 March 2020). Implementation of the agreement has, however, been lacking and in early September [2020], a large number of FRPI ex-combatants left a demobilization camp in the Walendu Bindu chieftaincy. The former fighters had complained of insufficient supplies and support in the camp.⁷³

With regards to the implementation of the peace agreement between the Congolese government and the FRPI, the UN reported:

Continued progress in the implementation of the peace agreement between the Government and the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) has had a positive impact on the security situation in southern Ituri. The process will ultimately result in the demobilization of around 1,100 FRPI combatants and their reintegration into their communities of origin. Nevertheless, the demobilization process has not yet commenced, owing to COVID-19-related challenges and lingering disagreements over the FRPI demand for the release from prison of its members, as well as amnesty and integration into the FARDC of some of its leaders.⁷⁴

Reporting on developments in Ituri between 2 December 2020 and 18 March 2021, the UN Secretary-General report stated that:

⁷¹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 27 September 2019, para. 25

⁷² UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2020, para. 21

⁷³ The Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project, [Regional Overview: Africa 27 September-3 October 2020](#), 7 October 2020

⁷⁴ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 September 2020, para. 18

In Irumu territory, the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) committed exactions, while the implementation of the peace agreement signed between the Government and FRPI remained stalled.⁷⁵

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering November 2020 to 23rd April 2021:

Fourteen months after the signing of the peace agreement between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Front de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI), the disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration process was still stalled. FRPI continued to demand the fulfilment of the terms of the agreement, especially regarding amnesty, integration into FARDC and payment of allowances. Stakeholders continued their efforts to save the process.⁷⁶

4.4. Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R)

For information on specific human rights violations committed by this particular group see sections [8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#), and [9.1. Recruitment and use of child soldiers](#).

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 29 June and 25 September 2019:

the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) armed group continued to pose a significant threat to the safety and security of civilians. The group is known to have carried out summary executions of civilians, rape, unlawful imprisonment and the imposition and collection of illegal taxes. The strategy of NDC-R to extend its area of control beyond Masisi and Walikale territories, in particular into Rutshuru territory, led to violent confrontations with other local armed groups. The clashes resulted in the killing of at least 60 civilians and caused large - scale displacement. Up to 25 schools remain closed in Masisi territory owing to insecurity, leaving approximately 3,000 students without access to education.⁷⁷

On Masisi and Rutshuru territories, between 29 September and 25 November 2019, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

In Masisi Territory and surrounding areas, the Nduma défense du CongoRénové (NDC-R) has continued to expand its area of control, resulting in a climate of impunity for human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence. Frequent clashes between NDC-R and the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS), the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and Nyatura armed groups have further increased insecurity and led to the killing of at least 46 civilians, the rape of 18 women and the displacement of civilians. FARDC launched military operations against armed groups in Masisi on 6 October [2019]. While APCLS, FDLR and Nyatura appeared to be the initial targets, some clashes were also reported with NDC-R later in the month.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 15

⁷⁶ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 10 June 2021, Summary

⁷⁷ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 27 September 2019, para. 19

⁷⁸ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 26 November 2019, para. 15

The Group of Experts on the DRC, as mandated by a UN Security Council resolution, reported in its report covering August to November 2019:

since the outset of its mandate, there have been increased armed clashes between the armed groups Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) and the Collectif des mouvements pour le changement (CMC) in Masisi and Rutshuru territories, North Kivu Province. NDC-R continued to recruit and expand while its leader, sanctioned individual Guidon Shimiray Mwissa (permanent reference number CDi.033 on the sanctions list of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo), remained at large and subject to a Congolese arrest warrant. NDC-R continued to receive arms and ammunition from some members of the armed forces, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC).⁷⁹

Further details on the NDC-R's leadership, recruitment and training, taxation and expansion into Rutshuru and Masisi territories between August and November 2019 can be found in the UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 20 December 2019, *paras. 12-19 and 36-38*.

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering November 2019 to 25 April 2020:

Clashes between Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) and various Nyatura armed groups increased in Masisi and Rutshuru territories. In particular, the Collectif des mouvements pour le changement/Forces de défense du peuple (CMC/FDP) lost positions following NDC-R attacks and FARDC operations in Bwito area, Rutshuru territory.⁸⁰

Further details on the NDC-R's command and control, as well as structure and support network between November 2019 and 25th April 2020 can be found in the UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 2 June 2020, *paras. 20-27*.

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering 25 April 2020 to 19 November 2020:

Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) split into two factions: one led by former NDC-R leader and sanctioned individual Guidon Shimiray Mwissa (CDi.033) and the other by his deputy, Gilbert Bwira Chuo. NDC-R continued to benefit from the diversion of government stocks, with several FARDC officers supplying them with weapons and ammunition. FARDC contributed to the NDC-R split, its restructuring and the strengthening of the Bwira faction as a proxy to track down the Guidon faction and fight other armed groups.⁸¹

The U.S. Department of State's annual human rights report covering 2020 included information from the Congo Research Group, which assessed that:

the NDC-R, under commander Guidon Shimiray Mwissa (Guidon) between 2014 and 2020, emerged as the most dominant and effective rebel group in the country. The report described the NDC-R's successful development of parallel governance and tax schemes in the large,

⁷⁹ UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 20 December 2019, *Summary*

⁸⁰ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 2 June 2020, *Summary*

⁸¹ UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 23 December 2020, *Summary*

resource-rich areas under its control. According to the Congo Research Group, the NDC-R's success battling other major groups, such as the FDLR, allowed it to establish and maintain a collaborative relationship with the FARDC, in which NDC-R was permitted to hold territory, established businesses, and collected taxes, "mimicking the FARDC and the state." In return, the FARDC supplied NDC-R with ammunition and uniforms and allowed the group unhindered passage through large swaths of the east. In July local media reported the group split after the ousting of the group's commander, Guidon, and FARDC increased attacks on Guidon's faction in an attempt to execute the existing warrant for his arrest. Other armed groups took advantage of this instability to move into NDC-R-controlled territory. As of November, Guidon remained at large.⁸²

The same report further highlighted that:

IAGs, including the Nduma Defense of Congo-Renewal (NDC-R) and other groups, were responsible for at least 1,315 summary executions as of June 30 [2020], which the UNJHRO described as a "staggering increase" when compared with the 416 killings recorded during the same period in 2019.⁸³

The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research reported on the following armed group attacks and conflict in North and South Kivu in 2020:

[...] The most active groups in North Kivu were the Nduma Defense of Congo-Renovated (NDC-R), Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo (APCLS), and the Collective Movement for Change (CMC) comprising Nyatura groups, whereas in South Kivu Raia Mutomboki (RM) factions and armed groups affiliated with the Banyamulenge community, on the one hand, and Bafuliuro, Babembe, and Banyindi communities, on the other, dominated the conflict dynamics. NDC-R remained active and operated in North Kivu territories Rutshuru, Masisi, and Walikale, extending both the territory under its control and its troop strength by co-opting fighters from other armed groups. NDC-R leader Shimirayi Mwisha Guidon further coordinated the Réseau des patriotes résistants congolais (RPRC), a coalition of armed groups including Mayi-Mayi Kifuafua, Mayi-Mayi Simba, Mayi-Mayi GuidesMouvement acquis au changement, Mayi-Mayi Mazembe Union pour la protection des innocents (UPDI), and Raia Mutomboki (RM) groups. In addition, APCLS-R had joined forces with NDC-R in late 2018 after the faction led by Mapenzi Bulere Likuwe had split from APCLS. The operational area controlled by NDC-R and their allies extended to cover Masisi, Walikale, Lubero, and Rutshuru territories in early 2020. Moreover, FARDC supported NDC-R activities targeting the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and provided logistical support [...]

NDC-R activities targeted Nyatura groups, mainly Nyatura APRCD, Nyatura Domi. Other groups organized within the CMC as well as the Mayi-Mayi Forces populaires de paix (FPP) in Masisi territory. In Rutshuru territory, NDC-R targeted the APCLS and FDLR. Furthermore, NDC-R targeted civilians in all regions they controlled. Discontent among NDC-R commanders and allies increased with Guidon's rule over the equitable sharing of internal resources, the loss of control over several mining sites and the inability to counter FDLR's influence. Subsequently, NDC-R commanders Gilbert Bwira and Mapenzi Likuhe dismissed Guidon, resulting in the split of the group. On June 8, NDC-R fighters led by Bwira and supported by FARDC attacked Guidon at the NDC-R headquarters in Pinga locality, Walikale. Alerted by a FARDC officer, Guidon escaped and regrouped with remaining followers in Walikale. Heavy infighting between the Bwira wing and the Guidon wing of NDC-R marked NDC-R's activity in the second half of the year, especially in Walikale. For instance, 17 people were killed and seven injured in a clash between Bwira-led and Guidon-led fighters on July 14 in the villages of Byamba and Bukucha. On July 20, NDC-R Bwira, supported by FARDC, clashed with NDC-R Guidon in Pinga, killing 37

⁸² U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 1 G., *Abuses in internal conflict*

⁸³ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 1 A., *Arbitrary deprivation of life and other unlawful or politically motivated killings*

people and leaving twelve injured. On September 4, NDC-R Bwira fighters shot and killed a civilian, whom they suspected of collaborating with NDC-R Guidon, in Mutongo village. The Bwira wing was often supported by FARDC. For instance, on October 14, FARDC and NDC-R Bwira attacked NDC-R Guidon in the villages of Nkingwa, Twamakuru, Koko, and Mpama, killing eleven people. [...] FDLR was mainly active in Rutshuru territory, North Kivu province, DRC [...]. Overall, FDLR [...] activity significantly decreased, mainly due to the ongoing military operation Sokola 2 by the Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC) and pressure from other armed groups [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)].⁸⁴

The Kivu Security Tracker reported on the activities of the NDC-R in several regions of the Congo, including North and South Kivu in 2020:

[...] Specific hotspots of conflict and violence have also shaped mobilization patterns. Adding to the aforementioned case of Beni, the NDC-R has formed one such conflict nexus, attracting allies but also galvanizing rivals against its main opponent, the Coalition des mouvements pour le changement du Congo (CMC), and against the various Mazembe groups in South Lubero. The group's implosion, which began in 2020 as it split and Congolese army support declined, may set off an opposite dynamic. [...] [...] Between 2015 and mid-2020, the NDC-R emerged as the Kivus' largest armed group in terms of territorial influence, with a vast track record of human rights violations. It also constituted a formidable threat to the weakened FDLR and most of the scattered Nyatura groups in Masisi and Rutshuru (in particular Dominique Ndaruhutse's CMC, a fierce ally of the Rwandan rebels). Indirectly, military pressure by the NDC-R and the Congo's and Rwanda's armies contributed to the assassination of the FDLR's historic commander, Sylvestre Mudacumura, as well as to the definitive dislodging of the CNRD toward South Kivu. Yet while Guidon Shimiray – a former army officer – is in several ways a product of the FARDC's politics of using certain armed groups as proxies against others, he and his group have increasingly become a liability for the army leadership and the Kinshasa government. In early July 2020, the NDC-R's second-in-command announced the removal of Guidon Shimiray, leading to the breakdown of the strikingly well-organized group, followed by waves of internecine fighting throughout the rest of 2020. [...]⁸⁵

Describing the security situation in North Kivu between 17 June and 18 September 2020, the UN Secretary-General noted in his report that:

In Walikale territory and surrounding areas, an internal split in the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) on 8 July [2020] led to the attempted overthrow of its leader, Guidon Shimiray Mwissa, by his deputy, Gilbert Bwira. A series of clashes between the two NDC-R factions subsequently occurred around Pinga. On 18 August, approximately 485 NDC-R Bwira elements surrendered to the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), handing in approximately 90 weapons. While the split weakened the NDC-R, the security situation did not improve, as rival armed groups moved to occupy positions vacated by the NDC-R in Rutshuru and Masisi territories and southern Lubero.⁸⁶

The Kivu Security Tracker reported the following on what it described as “split in the largest rebel territory in the Kivus”:

The month of July [2020] was marked by a split in the Nduma Defense of Congo-Rénové (NDC-R), the armed group that up to then controlled the largest territory in the Kivus. The second-

⁸⁴ Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, [Conflict Barometer 2020](#), 2021 [Analyzed Period: 01/01/20 – 12/31/20]

⁸⁵ Kivu Security Tracker, [The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo: Missed Opportunities, Protracted Insecurity and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies](#), 28 February 2021

⁸⁶ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 September 2020, para. 12

in-command of the movement, Gilbert Bwira, and other senior figures, announced the removal of Guidon Shimiray, the group's leader, which led to a split within this group. This event had many consequences. Clashes and abuses related to this conflict caused the death of 15 civilians in Walikale territory in a single month, which is unprecedented in this territory since the Kivu Security Tracker (KST) started collecting such data in June 2017.

The consequences of this split were also felt in the balance of power in Masisi, Rutshuru and Lubero territories. In Lubero territory, the new configuration called Mazembe (an ally of the NDC-R) weakened the Union des patriotes pour la défense des innocents (UPDI). Its leader since 2016, Kitete Bushu, was killed on July 16 [2020].⁸⁷

With regards to NDC's founder, the U.S. Department of State's report noted:

On November 23 [2020], a military court convicted Nduma Defense of Congo (NDC) founder Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka for war crimes, mass rape, recruitment of child soldiers, murder, and multiple other crimes. Sheka surrendered to MONUSCO in 2017, and his trial started in 2018. While NGO representatives commended the high quality of evidence presented at the trial, they also raised concerns regarding its slow pace, witness intimidation, and the lack of appeals process under the law for war crimes trials.⁸⁸

4.5. Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)

The ADF has also been linked to ISIS – Islamic State Central Africa Province, see section [4.10. Islamic State Central Africa Province \(ISAP\) / Islamic State of Iraq and Syria – Democratic Republic of the Congo \(ISIS-DRC\)](#).

For information on specific human rights violations committed by this particular group see sections [8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#), and [9.1. Recruitment and use of child soldiers](#).

The U.S. Department of State provided the following summary of the ADF, as reported by the Long War Journal:

Originally dedicated to overthrowing the Ugandan government, the ADF fled to eastern Congo in the mid 1990's and began aligning itself with other groups operating in the area and forging relationships with local communities.

Over time, and notably after a shift in leadership around 2014-2015, the ADF further radicalized, dramatically escalating attacks on Congolese civilians. It soon became clear that this radicalization accompanied efforts by the group to align itself with the Islamic State.

In 2016, the ADF began releasing a series of videos in an apparent attempt to publicly declare its radical ideology. Many of the videos demonstrate clear jihadist messaging, including mantras of establishing a caliphate, calls for violence against "infidels," and a declaration of their intention to impose a strict interpretation of Shari'a in both the DRC and Uganda.

The following year, the ADF received financing from Waleed Ahmed Zein, an East Africa-based terrorist who was later sanctioned by the US Treasury for his role within the Islamic State. Treasury noted that his network was able to move money to Islamic State fighters in "Syria, Libya, and Central Africa."

Zein's partner, Halima Adan Ali, was also sanctioned by the US Treasury for providing support to the Islamic State. In its press release, Treasury reiterated that Ali and Zein moved money for the Islamic State to fighters in Central Africa.

⁸⁷ Kivu Security Tracker, [Split in the largest rebel territory in the Kivus, Monthly report No 33 – July 2020](#), July 2020, p. 1

⁸⁸ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 1 G., Abuses in internal conflict

These links appear to have progressed such that, in April of 2019, the Islamic State claimed its first attack in the DRC under the “Central Africa Province” moniker. In its locally produced media, the group has also referred to itself as the Islamic State.

The group’s leader, Musa Baluku, has also contended that the ADF name is no longer used. Baluku said in a speech late last year that “there is no ADF anymore...ADF ceased to exist a long time ago.”

He further made his loyalty to the current Islamic State emir and self-proclaimed Caliph known by adding that “currently, we are a province, the Central African Province which is one province among the numerous provinces that make up the Islamic State that is under the Caliph and leader of all Muslims...Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Quraishi.”

Since its first attack under the ISCAP moniker, the group has claimed at least 110 operations in the Congo according to data kept by this author. The majority of these can be tied to verified ADF attacks based on reporting by the Kivu Security Tracker (a project that maps violence in eastern Congo) and by local media.⁸⁹

The U.S. Department of State’s annual report on Terrorism, covering 2019, reported:

The ADF has been present in Beni [North Kivu] for years and now includes a majority of Congolese fighters, although the ADF recruits fighters from around the region as well. In 2019, as in previous years, the ADF was responsible for numerous attacks on civilians, the FARDC, and UN peacekeepers. During the calendar year, the Kivu Security Tracker (a joint project between the Congo Research Group and Human Rights Watch) documented 310 civilian deaths in North Kivu attributed to the ADF, as of December 13, 2019.⁹⁰

The report further noted that:

Throughout 2019, the ADF attacked Congolese civilians, the FARDC, and MONUSCO peacekeepers located in Beni Territory, North Kivu and southern parts of Ituri in eastern DRC. The Kivu Security Tracker reported that the ADF had killed at least 310 civilians in Beni Territory as of December 13 [2019], with press reporting at least 32 additional deaths as of December 20 [2019]. A significant increase in planned attacks on civilians was announced by ADF in response to FARDC operations against the ADF launched on October 30 [2019].

Attacks have been conducted against civilians primarily by small groups of fighters, using small arms or machetes for the majority of attacks in areas where the ADF has been present for years.⁹¹

The Group of Experts on the DRC, as mandated by a UN Security Council resolution, reported in its report covering August to November 2019:

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) remained a serious threat to peace and stability in Beni and Irumu territories and continued to attack civilians and FARDC positions. ADF came under pressure following the launch, on 30 October 2019, of FARDC operations against its stronghold. Although Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da’esh) had publicly claimed responsibility for several attacks carried out in Beni territory, the Group was unable to confirm any direct link between ISIL and ADF at the time of writing the present report.⁹²

⁸⁹ Long War Journal, [State Department designates Islamic State in DRC, Moambique](#), 11 March 2021

⁹⁰ U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Terrorism 2019, Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 24 June 2020

⁹¹ U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Terrorism 2019, Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 24 June 2020

⁹² UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 20 December 2019, *Summary*

Further details on ADF's leadership and locations, incursions into Boga and Chabi, recruitment and training, possible links to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, and operations of the Congolese armed forces against the ADF between August and November 2019 can be found in the UN Security Council, [*Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 20 December 2019, *paras. 20-26*.

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering November 2019 to 25 April 2020:

In North Kivu, ADF benefited from established external and local recruitment and supply networks, and its combatants continued to target FARDC and civilians in Beni territory. The Group did not find any direct links between ADF and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).⁹³

Further details on ADF's violent combat against DRC's armed forces, its recruitment and supply networks, sources of financing and links with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant between November 2019 and 25th April 2020 can be found in the UN Security Council, [*Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 2 June 2020, *paras. 32-44*.

In July 2020, OHCHR released a statement reporting that the ADF has intensified its attacks against civilians in the eastern provinces of the DRC over the last 18 months, expanding its actions beyond areas in which it previously operated:

These attacks, which have left more than 793 people dead and dozens of others injured, may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes, according to a UN investigation. The ADF has been militarily active in Beni territory, in North Kivu province, for more than three decades. But following military campaigns against the armed group, particularly since October 2019, ADF combatants dispersed into small groups and some of these groups fled to other areas, especially to Irumu territory in neighbouring Ituri province, where the number and the intensity of the attacks have increased significantly. The impact on civilians of these changes is described in detail in a report by the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC (UNJHRO), which shows how the human rights abuses committed by ADF fighters have been systematic and brutal. Assaults used heavy weaponry during attacks against villages, including AK47s and mortars, and also machetes and knives. They often burned down entire villages, destroyed health centres and schools, and abducted and recruited men, women and children. "In the majority of cases, the means and the modus operandi of the attacks indicate a clear intention to leave no survivors. Entire families have been hacked to death," the report says. The report highlights that, given the widespread and systematic nature of the attacks directed against the civilian population, some of these human rights abuses may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. According to UNJHRO investigations, from 1 January 2019 to 30 June 2020, 793 civilians were killed, 176 wounded and 717 others abducted by ADF combatants in North-Kivu and Ituri provinces. During the same period, 59 children were recruited; and one school, seven health centres and dozens of civilian houses were attacked and looted. The violence triggered massive displacement between September 2019 and June 2020.⁹⁴

The full report mentioned above can be found [here](#).⁹⁵

⁹³ UN Security Council, [*Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 2 June 2020, *Summary*

⁹⁴ OHCHR, [*DRC: Attacks by ADF armed group may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes*](#), 7 July 2020

⁹⁵ OHCHR-MONUSCO, [*Report on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the Allied Democratic Forces armed group and by members of the defense and security forces in Beni*](#)

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering 25 April 2020 to 19 November 2020:

In North Kivu, operations of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, FARDC) scattered the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) into several mobile groups and extended the ADF area of operations. While supply chains were disrupted, ADF continued to attack FARDC and civilians. ADF demonstrated improved knowledge of improvised explosive device construction techniques. While Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) claimed responsibility for many attacks in Beni territory, the Group of Experts was unable to establish any direct link between the two groups.⁹⁶

In January 2021 an updated report was published in French focusing on the situation between July and December 2020.⁹⁷ Using an online translation tool, [Onlinedoctranslator.com](https://www.onlinedoctranslator.com), the following summary findings were translated from French into English:

In this update, the UNJHRO takes stock of the violations and abuses of human rights and the violations of international humanitarian law documented by the UNJHRO from 1er July to December 31, 2020. The human rights situation has deteriorated considerably, the ADF continued attacks against civilian populations with a peak during the month of December 2020 in the Ruwenzori sector. During the period under review, 313 human rights abuses were documented by the UNJHRO, which represents a considerable increase, with 173 violations documented during the previous six months. These attacks left at least 468 civilian victims of summary execution (including 345 men, 108 women and 15 children) from July to December 2020. During the same period, at least 77 people kidnapped including 20 women and three minors were killed. been released. The fate of 457 people including 62 women and nine minors is unknown to date.

The attack on 20 October 2020 on Beni prison by ADF fighters was a turning point in the upsurge in violence and had a negative impact on efforts to fight impunity. More than 1,300 detainees, including members of armed groups and the security and defense forces convicted or in preventive detention within the framework of legal proceedings, escaped.⁹⁸

The Combating Terrorism Center provided the following summary with regards to ADF attacks from November 2019 to October 2020:

[territory, North Kivu province and Irumu and Mambasa territories, Ituri province, between 1 January 2019 and 31 January 2020](#), July 2020

⁹⁶ UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 23 December 2020, *Summary*

⁹⁷ OHCHR-MONUSCO, [Violations and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by combatants of the Allied Democratic Forces \(ADF\) and members of the Congolese defense and security forces in the territories of Beni \(North Kivu\), Irumu and Mambasa](#), January 2021 [Atteintes et violations des droits de l'homme et du droit international humanitaire commises par des combattants des Forces alliées démocratiques (ADF) et des membres des forces de défense et de sécurité congolaises dans les territoires de Beni (Nord-Kivu), d'Irumu et de Mambasa (Ituri) [Mise à jour de juillet à décembre 2020]]

⁹⁸ OHCHR-MONUSCO, [Violations and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by combatants of the Allied Democratic Forces \(ADF\) and members of the Congolese defense and security forces in the territories of Beni \(North Kivu\), Irumu and Mambasa](#), January 2021, p. 4 [Atteintes et violations des droits de l'homme et du droit international humanitaire commises par des combattants des Forces alliées démocratiques (ADF) et des membres des forces de défense et de sécurité congolaises dans les territoires de Beni (Nord-Kivu), d'Irumu et de Mambasa (Ituri) [Mise à jour de juillet à décembre 2020]]

[...] In early November 2019, however—not long after al-Baghdadi's death—the trajectories of ISCAP's ADF and "Al Shabaab" branches began to diverge sharply. Even prior to the first official claim of an attack in the DRC, Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi visited Washington in April 2019 seeking assistance for fighting the ADF, framing it as a fight against the Islamic State, two and a half months after he had assumed office. Following months of escalating rhetoric by the Congolese government, the Congolese military (FARDC) launched a large-scale offensive on October 30, 2019, driving the ADF from most of its main base areas in Beni territory within a month. The ADF responded with vicious reprisal attacks on civilians as it tried to divert the FARDC from the frontlines, it appears to have relocated most of its fighters to new areas in Beni and neighboring Ituri territories, as well as reestablished recruitment and finance networks in Uganda. A brief lull in massacres perpetrated by the terrorists was followed by a rapid escalation beginning in March 2020 as the ADF attempted to clear civilians from its new areas of operation. By mid-September 2020, more than 800 civilians had been killed in around 200 retaliatory ADF attacks in Beni and Ituri. While individual ADF attacks remained for the most part relatively small-scale—occasionally killing dozens but on average resulting in five fatalities—the extremely high frequency of its attacks on Congolese civilians and military personnel has meant that although the FARDC has seized back territory, it has still struggled to contain ISCAP-ADF's violence.⁹⁹

In February 2021, the Kivu Security Tracker published the findings of its report that recorded that the ADF was responsible for more killings of civilians than any other armed group during the period of June 2017 to October 2020:

[...] Four armed groups – the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS), and the NDC-R – along with the national army account for over a third of all incidents and half of all civilians killed. The ADF is a particular threat, responsible for more killings of civilians (37%) by far than any other armed group. [...]¹⁰⁰

In March 2021 Vatican News summarised the groups origins and current standing as follows:

The group [ADF] has been carrying out attacks in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) since the 1990s, when the rebels arrived on the scene with a political agenda. They have since abandoned their political demands and degenerated into a terrorist militia group involved in trafficking minerals from the eastern DRC. In recent years, militias of the ADF have taken to calling themselves "Madinat Tawhid wa-l-Muwahidin (MTM)." Their alleged "affiliation" to the Islamic State (IS) is the subject of controversy and speculation.¹⁰¹

African Arguments published a report in March 2021, which discussed how ADF combatants are financed:

[...] external financing is not crucial for ADF's survival. According to recent interviews with detained ADF combatants, the group relies primarily on supplies obtained via looting and "business" operations in North Kivu [...].¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Combating Terrorism Center, Jason Warner, Ryan O'Farrell, Héní Nsaibia, and Ryan Cummings, [*Outlasting the Caliphate: The Evolution of the Islamic State Threat in Africa*](#), November/December 2020, Volume 13, Issue 11

¹⁰⁰ Kivu Security Tracker, [*The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo: Missed Opportunities, Protracted Insecurity and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies*](#), 28 February 2021

¹⁰¹ Vatican News, [*DRC: Over 20 civilians killed days after slaying of Italian ambassador*](#), 1 March 2021

¹⁰² African Arguments, [*The US has placed sanctions on ISIS-DRC, but does the group even exist?*](#), 31 March 2021

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering November 2020 to 23rd April 2021:

In North Kivu, despite operations of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, FARDC), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) armed group rebuilt and intensified its attacks, particularly in the Rwenzori sector. ADF increased its use of improvised explosive devices against FARDC and civilians. The involvement of ADF combatants from outside the Democratic Republic of the Congo contributed to modest advancements in improvised explosive device construction techniques. The Group was unable to establish direct support or command and control of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) over ADF, despite ADF attempts to project alignment with ISIL. ADF attacks and abduction of farmers, many of whom cultivated cocoa, took place across Beni territory. ADF and its collaborators undertook isolated acts of cocoa harvesting, theft and trade.¹⁰³

Further details on ADF's locations and leadership, recruitment, weaponry and military training, attacks against civilians in Rwenzori, ideology, propaganda and links with ISIL can be found in the UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 10 June 2021, *paras. 11-31*.

With regards to ADF's ties to ISIS, the U.S. Department of State's 2019 report on terrorism stated:

Rebel group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) established ties with ISIS in late 2018. Before its ISIS affiliation, the ADF previously attempted outreach to Islamist terrorist groups for multiple years, including online posts by some ADF members in 2016 and 2017 referring to their group Madinat Tauheed Wal Mujahedeen while displaying an ISIS-like flag. ISIS publicly recognized ADF as an affiliate in late 2018 and claimed responsibility for ADF attributed attacks starting in April 2019 after an attack on an Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) base near Kamango on April 16 [2019].¹⁰⁴

The U.S. Department of State, in March 2021, "confirmed that the group formerly known as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) is the Islamic State's official representative" and "responsible for many attacks across North Kivu and Ituri Provinces in eastern DRC", killing "over 849 civilians in 2020 alone".¹⁰⁵

The International Crisis Group stated in March 2021 with regards to these links:

A recent study on the ADF by George Washington University, which some U.S. officials privately endorse, provides evidence that ISIS has given financial assistance to the DRC group, and that there have been communications between the two organisations. Specifically, the report details financial transactions between Waleed Ahmed Zein, an ISIS financial operative who was sanctioned by the U.S. Department of Treasury in September 2018, and his alleged ADF contacts. It additionally details cases where ISIS disseminated propaganda about ADF attacks and presents ISIS-published photos of ADF leader Seka Musa Baluku, who according to the study has pledged allegiance to the global ISIS leadership, preaching to his recruits. The study also states, however, that it has found "no evidence of direct command and control orders" from ISIS to the ADF. The December 2020 UN report states that even if ISIS claimed 46 purported ADF attacks in 2020, compared to 29 in 2019, many of the claims inaccurately

¹⁰³ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 10 June 2021, *Summary*

¹⁰⁴ U.S. Department of State, [Country Reports on Terrorism 2019, Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 24 June 2020

¹⁰⁵ Long War Journal, [State Department designates Islamic State in DRC, Moambique](#), 11 March 2021

described the attacks' locations and dates, leading the authors to conclude that ISIS had "limited knowledge and control" of these operations. In the meantime, sources close to the ADF say one ADF faction appears to have rejected ISIS and may even be turning against Baluku's group.¹⁰⁶

[Note: The study mentioned in the excerpt above can be found [here](#): The George Washington University, Program on Extremism, *The Islamic State in Congo*, March 2021]

In March 2021 the U.S. Department of State added the Islamic State's Central African Province (ISCAP) to "its list of designated terrorist organizations", as well as the leader of "IS Congo", Musa Baluku, to its list as "specially designated global terrorists".¹⁰⁷

Following the designation, the International Crisis Group provided the following background on the ADF:

The ADF and ASWJ are groups whose violence has historically been first and foremost driven by local dynamics and grievances. They recruit mainly local fighters. Although it emerged in the 1990s as an Islamist movement fighting the Ugandan state, the ADF has since the 2000s mostly been active in the northern part of the DRC's North Kivu province, where it has recruited Congolese fighters, including by force, and entrenched itself by manipulating disputes among local chiefs and communities in areas under its control. Having developed tactical alliances with both senior army officers and armed groups fighting security forces, it both fuels and feeds off an internecine and murky conflict on the ground [...]. Both the ADF and ASWJ have grown more dangerous over the years, becoming increasingly bold in their attacks against security forces while inflicting terrible violence against civilians. The ADF, long dormant in the DRC, first began resurfacing again in 2014, mainly committing atrocities against civilians in gruesome machete attacks. From 2017, the group then began turning its attention increasingly against government security forces and UN peacekeepers. Its operations became more sophisticated and used greater firepower. According to a December 2020 report by UN investigators in the DRC, the ADF has over time also become better at building improvised explosive devices, although it has nothing like the ISIS core's expertise. Recent Congolese military operations between late 2019 and October 2020 have killed hundreds of fighters belonging to the ADF, which Crisis Group's research indicates is now split into competing factions. Some elements have moved east to the foothills of the Rwenzori mountains bordering Uganda, and some north into neighbouring Ituri province, where they have been involved in reported killings.¹⁰⁸

Africa Arguments presented in an article published in March 2021 the articles for and against a suggested link between ADF and ISIS, which can be accessed [here](#).¹⁰⁹

4.6. *Coopérative pour le développement au Congo (CODECO)*

The Kivu Security Tracker reported on the activities of the armed group CODECO in the Ituri region as follows:

¹⁰⁶ International Crisis Group, [Understanding the New U.S. Terrorism Designations in Africa](#), 18 March 2021

¹⁰⁷ Long War Journal, [State Department designates Islamic State in DRC, Moambique](#), 11 March 2021

¹⁰⁸ International Crisis Group, [Understanding the New U.S. Terrorism Designations in Africa](#), 18 March 2021

¹⁰⁹ See African Arguments, [The US has placed sanctions on ISIS-DRC, but does the group even exist?](#), 31 March 2021

[...] In Ituri, the Coopérative pour le développement au Congo (CODECO) armed group, which emerged in 2017, has undone years of precarious peace, raising fears that Ituri – which hosts 1.7 million displaced people alone – will slip back into protracted instability. [...] In Ituri, which we include in this exercise for the first time, the evolving Djugu crisis gave birth in 2017 to a new, elusive belligerent known as CODECO, which is now disintegrating into various smaller factions.¹¹⁰

The same source further noted:

[...] armed factions operating under the CODECO label went on a rampage across numerous Bahema chieftaincies and Walendu sectors, first concentrating on Djugu territory and slowly branching out to neighboring Mahagi. CODECO can trace its origins back several decades to an agricultural-religious collective led by Bernard Kakado, a local Lendu strongman and erstwhile supporter of the FRPI. [...] In late 2020, violence subsided to a certain degree as several CODECO factions engaged in negotiations with the army and the provincial government. Nonetheless, a serious peace process or demobilization effort has not started, and tensions remain high, as the September 2020 incursion of a CODECO faction into Bunia illustrated.¹¹¹

The International Crisis Group reported in July 2020 about CODECO:

CODECO was founded in the 1970s by the late Bernard Kakado, with the aim of promoting agriculture in the chiefdom of Walendu-Bindi in Irumu territory. During the 1999-2003 war, Kakado organised a Lendu self-defence operation before joining the FRPI, while CODECO – as an agricultural cooperative – ceased to exist. At the war's end, the various ethnic militias did not completely dissolve; some, like the FNI and the FRPI, continued their activities and hid their weapons in the different communities. When militia attacks began in 2017, Lendu civilians in Djugu attributed the violence to "CODECO", suggesting a link to Kakado and the FRPI. But according to security forces, some of the Lendu attackers who fall under the authority of Ngudjolo and use the CODECO brand name have stronger ties to the FNI [...] The army arrested several militiamen and others were killed, including Justin Ngudjolo himself on 27 March [2020] at Mokpa, in the Buba groupment in Djugu territory. [...] Following Ngudjolo's death, CODECO's organisational structure became opaque, and the group's degree of influence and control over other Lendu militias remains uncertain. Several factions are vying for CODECO leadership, including the URPDC, which has positioned itself as the prime candidate. This political and military movement, which was created on 19 September 2018 and spoke out on 28 January 2020 to claim responsibility for "guerrilla" actions in Djugu territory, rejects the names "CODECO" and "Ngudjolo armed group" as imposed by "third parties". Its objective is to unite all the ethnic militias active in the province, not only the Lendu.¹¹²

With regards to the most recent conflict in Ituri, the same source noted:

At the start of the latest conflict in Ituri, the identity of the attackers was difficult to confirm, even if everything pointed to a group of mostly Lendu youths, based in the Walendu-Pitsi sector. Authorities later named them as being part of CODECO, an association of militias. On 12 June 2019, eighteen months after the violence started, Congolese armed forces announced that they had identified the leader of this association, a certain "Ngudjolo". Several witnesses claim that CODECO helped mobilise Lendu youth with anti-Hema hate rhetoric. Similarly, its sanctuary in Wago forest reportedly served as a training base for the youths involved in the attacks. Governor Bamanisa himself designated the militias as Lendu: "At this stage, the

¹¹⁰ Kivu Security Tracker, [The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo: Missed Opportunities, Protracted Insecurity and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies](#), 28 February 2021

¹¹¹ Kivu Security Tracker, [The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo: Missed Opportunities, Protracted Insecurity and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies](#), 28 February 2021

¹¹² International Crisis Group, [DR Congo: Ending the Cycle of Violence in Ituri](#), 15 July 2020

perpetrators of this violence have been identified. They are Lendu militias based in Wago forest and led by a certain Justin Ngudjolo". In June 2019 on local radio, Ngudjolo declared himself leader of the "armed group of Wago forest", heading a force of 2,350, armed and trained to defend the Lendu population against the Hema.¹¹³

In October 2020 MONUSCO reported that "CODECO militiamen had responded favourably to the call of the Congolese Head of state, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi, to lay down their weapons; an appeal made through former warlords in the region. Unfortunately, the CODECO / ALC faction, active in the Walendu Tatsi, in Ezekere, more or less 17km from Bunia, in the territory of Djugu, finally decided, unilaterally, to withdraw from the peace process. Its members have resumed committing abuses against civilians, including looting, theft and arson, etc.". ¹¹⁴

The Group of Experts on the DRC, as mandated by the UN Security Council, reported in great detail between November 2020 and April 2021 on the "lack of progress towards a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and consequences", "conflict-related sexual violence", "killings of civilians, including children", "weaponry", the occupation of gold mines by CODECO.¹¹⁵

4.7. Nyatura Groups

For information on specific human rights violations committed by this particular group see sections [8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#), and [9.1. Recruitment and use of child soldiers](#).

Human Rights Watch reported specifically on attacks on civilians by armed groups and government forces:

[...] More than 130 armed groups were active in eastern Congo's North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri provinces, attacking civilians. The groups included [...] the largely Rwandan Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and allied Congolese Nyatura groups [...] Many of their commanders have been implicated in war crimes, including ethnic massacres, rape, forced recruitment of children, and pillage. The Congolese security forces conducted simultaneous operations against armed groups in eastern Congo, with mixed results and at times using militia as proxy forces against other groups [...]¹¹⁶

Similarly, the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research reported on the following armed group attacks and conflict in North and South Kivu in 2020:

[...] The most active groups in North Kivu were [...] the Collective Movement for Change (CMC) comprising Nyatura groups [...] NDC-R activities targeted Nyatura groups, mainly Nyatura APRCD, Nyatura Domi.¹¹⁷

On Masisi and Rutshuru territories, between 29 September and 25 November 2019, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

¹¹³ International Crisis Group, [DR Congo: Ending the Cycle of Violence in Ituri](#), 15 July 2020

¹¹⁴ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), [FARDC and MONUSCO have deterred CODECO rebel incursion into Bunia](#), 28 October 2020

¹¹⁵ See UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 10 June 2021 and specifically *paras. 80-100*

¹¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2021](#) [Events of 2020], 2021

¹¹⁷ Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, [Conflict Barometer 2020](#), 2021 [Analyzed Period: 01/01/20 – 12/31/20]

In Masisi Territory and surrounding areas, [...] Frequent clashes between NDC-R and the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS), the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and Nyatura armed groups have further increased insecurity and led to the killing of at least 46 civilians, the rape of 18 women and the displacement of civilians. FARDC launched military operations against armed groups in Masisi on 6 October [2019]. While APCLS, FDLR and Nyatura appeared to be the initial targets, some clashes were also reported with NDC-R later in the month.¹¹⁸

Reporting on developments in the DRC between 26 November 2019 and 16 March 2020, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

In Masisi and Rutshuru territories, [...] Frequent clashes occurred between the Nduma défense du Congo -Rénové, the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and Nyatura groups. At least 43 civilians were killed in those clashes.¹¹⁹

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 17 March and 16 June 2020:

The conflict between the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) and the Nyatura coalition with FDLR and the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) continued to create insecurity in Masisi and Rutshuru territories and resulted in the further expansion of the area controlled by NDC-R. There were nearly 200 separate incidents of clashes and exactions by these groups, during which over 160 civilians were killed. Among the armed groups active in the area, NDC-R fighters committed the greatest number of human rights violations, including conflict related sexual violence. In response, the Military Prosecutor of North Kivu issued an arrest warrant for the NDC-R leader, Guidon Shimiray Mwissa, which has not been executed to date.¹²⁰

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 19 September and 1 December 2020:

In Petit Nord, North Kivu, the security situation deteriorated in the surroundings of Pinga, where in-fighting between rival factions of the Nduma défense du CongoRénové (NDC-R) escalated in September and October. Those clashes resulted in the death of 17 civilians, including 1 woman, the rape of 3 women and the displacement of 5,149 families. The situation was further exacerbated by the increased activity of Nyatura militias and of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), which attempted to seize control of areas vacated by NDC-R as a result of the split within the group. Overall, MONUSCO recorded at least 113 incidents, resulting in the death of 85 civilians, including at least 10 women and 6 children, representing a 12 per cent increase in the number of civilians killed compared with the previous reporting period [...]

Between July and October [2020], 2,747 human rights violations and abuses were documented throughout the country, a small decrease compared with the previous four months (March to June). State agents, in particular FARDC soldiers, were responsible for 48 per cent of those

¹¹⁸ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 26 November 2019, para. 15

¹¹⁹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2020, para. 17

¹²⁰ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 June 2020, para. 12

violations, whereas 52 per cent were committed by armed groups, with Nyatura, ADF and FDLR combatants as the main perpetrators..¹²¹

Covering the period 16 September 2020 to 15 March 2021 a UN Secretary-General report stated:

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) reported that, between September and December [2020], 51 per cent of all documented violations were committed by armed groups and other non-State actors, with Nyatura, ADF, FDLR and Djugu-based armed assailants as the main perpetrators. State agents, including FARDC soldiers, were responsible for the remaining 49 per cent of the violations. Conflict-affected provinces, particularly North Kivu, were the most impacted.¹²²

With regards to the situation in Petit Nord in early 2021, the UN report stated:

In Petit Nord, the security situation deteriorated in most territories, in particular in Masisi and Rutshuru, following a spike in armed group activity [...]

Clashes between the NDC-R Bwira faction and a coalition of armed groups, including Nyatura, Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) and Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, increased as the NDC-R Bwira faction attempted to reclaim territory previously lost in Masisi territory. At least nine civilians (five men, three women and a boy) were killed and three others injured. Reportedly, on 2 February [2021], the NDC-R Bwira faction also launched attacks against the Coalition des mouvements pour le changement/Nyatura in Matenge.¹²³

4.8. Mai Mai Groups

For information on specific human rights violations committed by this particular group see sections [8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#), and [9.1. Recruitment and use of child soldiers](#).

Human Rights Watch reported specifically on attacks on civilians by armed groups and government forces:

[...] More than 130 armed groups were active in eastern Congo's North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri provinces, attacking civilians. The groups included [...] the Mazembe and Yakutumba Mai Mai groups [...] Many of their commanders have been implicated in war crimes, including ethnic massacres, rape, forced recruitment of children, and pillage. The Congolese security forces conducted simultaneous operations against armed groups in eastern Congo, with mixed results and at times using militia as proxy forces against other groups [...]¹²⁴

The French Asylum Office (Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides (OFPRA)) produced a French COI report in April 2020 on 'The Ngilima (or Bangirima) militia in the Beni

¹²¹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 November 2020, paras. 10 and 21

¹²² UN Security Council, [Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region](#), 30 March 2021, para. 29

¹²³ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 19

¹²⁴ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2021](#) [Events of 2020], 2021

region', also known as the Mai Mai Groups.¹²⁵ Using an online translation tool, [Onlinedoctranslator.com](https://www.onlinedoctranslator.com), the following information was translated from French into English tracing the history of the Mai Mai groups:

In the early 1990s, revolt movements broke out within indigenous communities while the country was in the midst of a political crisis.

The provincial authorities of North Kivu, mainly Nande and Hunde, contest the political and land rights enjoyed by the Banyarwanda and refused their participation in any political election. For their part, the Hutu Banyarwanda had regrouped since 1982 under an association defending the interests of Hutu farmers and whose access was exclusively reserved for members of their ethnic group: the Mutual of Virunga Farmers (MAGRIVI).

Some of its members had organized themselves into small armed groups to deal with the Hunde, Nande, Nyanga and Tembo tribes.

In March 1993, the governor of North Kivu, JP Kalumbo, and his Federalist Christian Democracy party (DCF / Nyamwis) encouraged young Nande to join the Ngilima self-defense militias, and the young Hunde and Nyanga to join the Mayi-Mayi militias (or Mayi-Mayi) in order to fight the Banyarwanda in the territories of Walikale, Rutshuru and Masisi.

The Ngilima were also known as Mai-Mai, as was the case in Goma. Before 1998, the name of this militia varied according to the place, or the ethnic group which referred to it. Indeed, in the neighboring territories of Masisi, Rutshuru and Lubero, these militias were identified under the name of "Ngilima", whereas in the circles of ethnic associations, they are known under the name of "combatants", "vijana" (young people), or "Batiri" and "Katuku" in the territory of Wakilale.

Subsequently, the terms "mayi-mayi (or mayi mayi)" and "ngilima or bangilima" will generally designate all the militias armed with young combatants whose traditional magical beliefs would make them invincible.

The Ngilima militias represented between 1,000 and 1,400 young combatants mainly from the Nande and Hunde communities, as well as deserters from the Zairian Armed Forces (FAZ). Their members were recruited in North Kivu, in the area from Goma to Kisangani. Refusing all foreign domination, their main objective was to drive "all foreigners" from their lands. They were particularly active in the Virunga National Park and made a living from poaching. Known for their racketeering activities in the regions of Beni and Lubero, members of these militias contested the power of former President Mobutu. Renowned for their indiscipline and their lack of organization, the Ngilima "multiplied in the villages and hills without a single command", which complicated alliances and collaborations with other armed movements, according to researcher Arsène Mwaka [...]

In Lubero and around Beni, the Ngilima collaborated with the Kasingiens, a militia grouping together young Nande from the areas of Congo-Manday and Kasingi who had formed into rural gangs opposed to Mobutu's policy.

In March 1993, they fought alongside members of MAGRIVI and carried out an attack against the Tutsi in a market located around Ntoto.

In Masisi, they had been joined by Nande, Tembo, Nyanga and Hunde groups in order to carry out attacks against the Banyarwanda community.

During this period thousands of Tutsis were massacred and nearly 18,000 were forced into exile in Rwanda and Uganda.

From 1996, the Ngilima militia rallied to the Tutsi cause, joining the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) founded on October 18, 1996 and whose spokesperson was Laurent-Désiré Kabila.

The AFDL was mainly composed of Banyamulenge grouping:

- The Popular Revolution Party (PRP): founded in Zaire in 1967 by Laurent-Désiré Kabila.
- The National Council of Resistance for Democracy (CNRD) of Kissime Ngandu.

¹²⁵ OFPRA, [The Ngilima \(or Bangirima\) militia in the Beni region](#), 8 April 2020 [La malice Ngilima (ou Bangirima) dans la région de Beni]

- The Revolutionary Movement for the Liberation of Zaire (MRLZ) led by Mr. Masavu Ningaba, a Bashi, one of the main ethnic groups in South Kivu
- The People's Democratic Alliance (ADP) led by Mr. Déogratias Bugera, a Tutsi from Masisi.
- It was also supported by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).

The Ngilima had been recruited by Kisase Ngandu, one of the founders of AFDL who had provided them with military training as well as numerous weapons in exchange for their support.

Most of the militiamen who joined the AFDL were inexperienced young people and had little responsibility for waging the war. They were therefore mostly excluded from any military participation. Thus, after the fall of Mobutu in 1997, many of them decided to join the Mai-Mai, or to integrate different Rwandan or Ugandan armed groups.

After this period, the term "Ngilima" is replaced by that of *maï-maï* (or *may-may*) to designate all the so-called tribal militias active in Kivu.

Thus, no information on the militia was found among the public sources consulted after their affiliation with the AFDL.¹²⁶

According to the same COI report:

The Mai-Mai constitute one of the main armed groups operating in Beni and Lubero, as elsewhere in the Kivus. They fight against any foreign occupation as well as the defense of their traditions and territories. Most of the movements are made up of local fighters from their different communities, but militias have also formed out of inter-ethnic alliances. It is therefore impossible to provide a description of their internal structure due to the haphazard nature of militias that identify as Mai-Mai, and whose alliances evolve according to perceived threat or reward.

In a 2001 interview with the NGO Human Rights Watch, a political cadre from the Mayi-Mayi group operating in the Beni region provided the following information: "Anyone can be a Mayi-Mayi. When you hear people talking about Mayi Mayi, it is nothing other than people of the population who are tired of this war, do not know what else to do and feel that it is better to go to the forest. to ensure that their rights are respected Yes, there are women, women guerrillas. Yes, there are children. Children nine, ten and over who are soldiers, who are trained... The Mai-Mai are the people themselves - it's me, it's another. If my rights are threatened, I have to organize something to defend myself... We don't want to be led by Ugandans".

The Mai-Mai do not only play a defensive role for the local population. Authors of numerous massacres, rapes, looting of local villages, and other human rights violations, they regularly attack several localities in Béni.

In 2018, the Congolese armed forces launched a major offensive against the Mai-Mai Mazembe, a militia recruiting from the Nande community.

This militia controlled several villages in North Kivu in 2017. It was considered one of the most active in the region and having had the most clashes with the army between 2017 and June 2019.

According to the Kivu Security Tracker (KST), a Kivu security barometer from Human Rights Watch and the Congo Study Group, Mai-Mai Mazembe and Yakutumba are currently listed among the top 10 armed groups in the Beni region.¹²⁷

The Group of Experts on the DRC, as mandated by a UN Security Council resolution, reported in its report covering August to November 2019:

¹²⁶ OFPRA, [The Ngilima \(or Bangirima\) militia in the Beni region](#), 8 April 2020 [La malice Ngilima (ou Bangirima) dans la region de Beni], p. 3-5

¹²⁷ OFPRA, [The Ngilima \(or Bangirima\) militia in the Beni region](#), 8 April 2020 [La malice Ngilima (ou Bangirima) dans la region de Beni], p. 5-6

In Minembwe, South Kivu Province, a Mai-Mai armed group coalition led by Mai-Mai Yakutumba affiliated with Babembe, Bafuliru, Bavira and Banyindu communities clashed with Ngomino and Twigwaneho armed groups affiliated with the Banyamulenge community.¹²⁸

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering November 2019 to 25 April 2020:

In Maniema, the Mai-Mai Malaika, led by Sheikh Hassani Huzaifa Mitenda and active in Kabambare territory, lost most of its camps around Salamabila following FARDC operations, and experienced internal dissension.¹²⁹

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering 25 April 2020 to 19 November 2020:

In South Kivu, the structure of Mai-Mai Yakutumba changed following the defection of deputy leader Alonda Bitu in August 2020. The armed group continued to finance its activities through the illegal exploitation of gold in the Misisi area and illicit logging, particularly of redwood, a species protected by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.¹³⁰

Further information on the Mai-Mai Yakutumba's structure and allies and involvement in natural resources during the Group's reporting period 25 April to 19 November 2020 can be found in UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 23 December 2020, paras. 67-75.

The same source reported in its report covering November 2020 to April 2021:

Despite its weakening and some defections, Mai-Mai Yakutumba, led by William Amuri Yakutumba, remained one of the most active armed groups across South Kivu, Maniema and Tanganyika provinces [...]

Yakutumba retained leadership and de facto control of the Coalition nationale du peuple pour la souveraineté du Congo (CNPSC) and relied on CNPSC leaders [...] to maintain territorial control. CNPSC comprised Mai-Mai groups, including Mai-Mai Echilo, Mai-Mai Réunion, Mai-Mai René, Mai-Mai Ngalyabatu, Mai-Mai Mulumba Marehunu, Mai-Mai Malaika [...] Mai-Mai Napata and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale

During the reporting period, Mai-Mai Yakutumba was estimated to comprise between 400 and 600 armed combatants.⁹⁰ Following the split with former deputy Alonda Bitu, alias Alida [...] and the 4 April 2021 defection of another deputy, Hercule Moussa, the group's command structure changed [...]

Hercule left the group with several combatants and arms and tried to bring other Mai-Mai groups with him, including Alida's and Apa Na Pale. Not all Yakutumba combatants were armed. They had AK-type assault rifles, PKM machine guns, RPG-7 launchers, light machine guns, 60 mm mortars, and hand grenades.

In early January 2021, Yakutumba established new headquarters in Kongwe, 5 km north of Kipupu, Itombwe sector, to be closer to military operations against Banyamulenge armed groups in the Hauts-Plateaux [...] ⁹² but retained active

¹²⁸ UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 20 December 2019, Summary

¹²⁹ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 2 June 2020, Summary

¹³⁰ UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 23 December 2020, Summary

mobility between those headquarters, Mayinombe (Lulengue sector), Makol and Magembwe (Fizi territory).

Mai-Mai Yakutumba continued to generate financial income from members of the Bembe community inside and outside of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 93 from redwood, gold exploitation [...] and fishing .¹³¹

Referring to human rights violations throughout 2020 as documented and confirmed by the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO), its analysis for the year found that “The year 2020 was also characterised by a proliferation and activism of Mayi-Mayi armed groups, accompanied by an increase in the number of human rights abuses committed by these groups (533 abuses, a decrease of 23% compared to 2019). These groups have been particularly active in the provinces of North Kivu (50%) and South Kivu (20%) [...] with a presence in Ituri (5%).¹³²

According to the UN Secretary-General’s report, covering major events and developments between 29 June and 25 September 2019, in the Uvira and Fizi territories of South Kivu:

Intercommunal conflict between Banyamulenge groups, supported by the Gumino and Twigwaneho militias, and the Babembe, Bafuliru and Banyindu communities, supported by various Mai-Mai groups, resulted in serious human rights violations in the Minembwe area of Fizi territory.¹³³

On Fizi and Uvira territories, between 29 September and 25 November 2019, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

Ethnically motivated violence against civilians on the high and middle plateaus of Fizi and Uvira territories remains a major source of concern, in particular in the Minembwe area. Since March 2019, Ngumino, Twigwaneho and Mai-Mai groups have killed at least 44 civilians and destroyed 89 villages. Worryingly, these attacks have targeted civilians on the basis of their perceived community affiliation, with the Banyamulenge particularly affected on one hand, and the Bafuliro, Babembe and Banyindu, on the other.¹³⁴

The U.S. Department of State’s annual report on human rights reported that in 2020, “In North Kivu Province, the NDC-R, Mai Mai Mazembe, ADF, FDLR, as well as a host of smaller armed groups fought among themselves and caused significant population displacements as they fought over territory. There were reports some elements within the FARDC collaborated with some factions of the NDC-R”.¹³⁵

According to the UN Secretary-General’s report covering major events and developments between 17 March and 16 June 2020:

¹³¹ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 10 June 2021, paras. 127-130

¹³² UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, para. 24

¹³³ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 27 September 2019, para. 22

¹³⁴ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 26 November 2019, para. 17

¹³⁵ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 1. G, Abuses in internal conflict

In South Kivu, renewed violence along ethnic lines broke out in the wider Minembwe area, with over 30 civilians killed since the beginning of the year. In Bijombo, clashes between local Twigwaneho militias and Mai-Mai fighters have occurred on a weekly basis, triggering several MONUSCO interventions. In late April [2020], FARDC clashed with Mai-Mai groups for several consecutive days in the Minembwe area, resulting in multiple casualties. An estimated 130,000 people remain internally displaced, with few prospects of returning in the near future owing to the unstable security situation [...]

The security situation also deteriorated in the border area of South Kivu, Maniema and Tanganyika Provinces owing to activity of Twa militias and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale. Following a reported surge in sexual violence committed by these groups, MONUSCO deployed a temporary base as a deterrent. Mai-Mai Malaika activity in Kabambare territory, Maniema Province, also continued to cause forced displacement.¹³⁶

An analytical note published by OHCHR-MONUSCO covering the period between February 2019 and June 2020 in the highlands of Mwenga, Fizi and Uvira territories found:

Human rights abuses attributable to coalitions of Mayi-Mayi⁴ armed groups, Biloze Bishambuke and RED-Tabara/FNL-Nzabampema

The UNJHRO documented 92 human rights abuses by Mayi-Mayi, Biloze Bishambuke and RED-Tabara/FNL combatants during the reporting period. These include 32 abuses of the right to life, with at least 44 victims of summary executions (37 men and seven women, including 41 Banyamulenge, one Bafuliiru and one Bembe⁵) and one case of death threats (one man, from the Bafuliiru community). On 12 May 2019, four men over the age of 80 were killed in Rusankuku, Fizi territory by Mayi-Mayi combatants suspected of being in coalition with Burundian RED-Tabara combatants. On 1 November 2019, a 75-year-old Banyamulenge woman was raped and killed by Mayi-Mayi combatants in Rugezi, Uvira territory.

Other human rights abuses documented include 18 cases of abuse of the right to physical integrity with 37 victims, including 26 victims of sexual violence (22 women and four children, of which 18 were Banyamulenge, five were Bembe and one was Bafuliiru). The UNJHRO also documented five cases of abduction with 14 victims (seven women and seven men, of which 13 were Banyamulenge and one was Bafuliiru). On 4 March 2020, five women from the Babembe community were raped by Mayi-Mayi and Biloze Bishambuke combatants in Bahenga. Finally, 37 cases of looting were documented.¹³⁷

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 19 September and 1 December 2020:

Mai-Mai and ADF activity continued in Irumu and Mambasa territories along the border areas of Ituri and North Kivu. The increased presence of those armed groups also fuelled underlying tensions between the Nande, Nyalı and Hutu communities, who accuse one another of supporting the movement of those armed groups into the area.¹³⁸

Reporting on the human rights situation between 2 December 2020 and 18 March 2021, the UN Secretary-General report stated that

¹³⁶ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 June 2020, paras. 13-15

¹³⁷ OHCHR-MONUSCO, [Analytical note on the human rights situation in the highlands of Mwenga, Fizi and Uvira territories, South Kivu province, between February 2019 and June 2020](#), August 2020, paras. 10 and 11

¹³⁸ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 November 2020, para. 18

On 12 January [2021], the garrison military court of Bukavu sentenced Takungomo Mukambilwa Le Pouce, a deputy to the leader of Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki Charlequin, to 20 years in prison for crimes against humanity, including murder, rape, torture, sexual slavery and enforced disappearance, and to the payment of damages to victims, which is enforceable through the seizure of all of his property. The courts also ordered that the victims be enabled to return to their villages.¹³⁹

In January 2021, Reporters Without Borders documented Mai-Mai abuses against journalists and media outlets:

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) call on the authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo to take firm measures to improve the safety of journalists who are exposed to threats and violence by Mai-Mai militiamen and other armed groups in the east of the country.

Raka FM, a community radio station in Kazimia, in the eastern province of Sud-Kivu, is one of the latest targets. Members of a Mai-Mai rebel militia went to the station on the evening of 12 January [2021] looking for its director, Jacques Mulengwa. When they discovered he wasn't there, they promised to return. The visit just came just a few hours after Raka FM broadcast a statement by the local army commander accusing the militia of attacking a nearby locality two days earlier. Mulengwa told RSF that, the day after the visit, the militiamen sent him an SMS message accusing him of being paid by the army to undermine their reputation within the local community. Fearing for his life, Mulengwa has stopped working at the radio station.

"What with threats, intimidation attempts, kidnappings and an execution-style murder, we have logged at least 13 Mai-Mai abuses against journalists and media outlets in the eastern DRC since 2019," said Arnaud Froger, the head of RSF's Africa desk. [...]

One of the most recent previous cases of Mai-Mai violence registered by RSF was in June [2020]. Bwira Bwalitse, the manager of Bakumbule community radio in Nord-Kivu province, who often urged armed groups to lay down their arms in a programme he hosted, was abducted while returning home by motorcycle on 16 June. His colleagues were told a few days later that he had been killed. His body has not been found.

Mainly active in Nord-Kivu and Sud-Kivu provinces and divided into different groups, the Mai-Mai militias lack their own media outlets and do not hesitate to use threats and violence in an attempt to control coverage of their activities, whether by preventing radio stations from covering certain news items or pressuring them to cover others.

In November 2019, when the DRC was struggling to recover from an Ebola outbreak, Papy Mumbere Mahamba, a journalist who hosted a programme about Ebola on a community radio station in Lwemba, a village near the town of Mambasa in neighbouring Ituri province, was murdered by Mai-Mai in his home. Like many other rebel groups, the Mai-Mai had strongly opposed the measures being taken to combat the Ebola epidemic. They also threatened to burn down the radio station and kill all of its journalists, forcing it to cease operating. Several other radio stations in the Mambasa area reacted by ceasing to mention Ebola on the air. [...]

The level of abuses against journalists and media is still very worrying, especially in the east of the country, where violence reigns. Of the 13 Mai-Mai abuses against journalists and media that RSF has registered since 2019, nine were cases of threats and four involved actual use of force or violence, including a murder and an enforced disappearance. The resulting climate of terror has led to a great deal self-censorship and, in the past two years, three radio stations decided to stop broadcasting, at least temporarily.

The DRC is ranked 150th out of 180 countries in RSF's 2020 World Press Freedom Index.¹⁴⁰

With regards to the situation in Petit Nord in early 2021, the UN report stated:

¹³⁹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 27

¹⁴⁰ RSF, [Mai-Mai rebel threat to journalists in eastern DRC](#), 21 January 2021

In Petit Nord, the security situation deteriorated in most territories, in particular in Masisi and Rutshuru, following a spike in armed group activity. In early January [2021], sporadic clashes between the Mai-Mai forces patriotiques populaires-armée du peuple (FPP-AP) and the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) Guidon faction resulted in the displacement of approximately 3,000 people to Lubero territory. [...]

On 10 January [2021], alleged Mai-Mai Jackson elements ambushed and killed six rangers of the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation in Nyamitwiwi. FARDC increased its operations against armed groups in Rutshuru and Masisi territories, resulting in the killing of at least 14 civilians, including 2 children, and some displacement of the population. On 1 February [2021], a FARDC soldier was reportedly killed and 250 households were displaced from Showa village to Masisi centre during a FARDC operation against APCLS. On 23 January [2021], FARDC soldiers clashed with Mai-Mai FPP-AP at the barrier in Buleusa, northern Walikale territory, resulting in the death of two civilian boys, three FARDC soldiers and two armed group members.¹⁴¹

4.9. M23 - Mouvement du 23 Mars

In January 2020, Amnesty International reported that:

[...] In November 2019, a senior official in the Office of the President wrote to Congolese courts asking them to “suspend” arrest warrants issued in 2013 against officials of the former March 23 Movement (M23) suspected of committing serious human rights abuses during the 2012-2013 rebellion. “President Tshisekedi has a constitutional responsibility to the Congolese people to deliver accountability for all crimes, past and present, committed against them and their families,” Deprose Muchena said. “Pursuing peace at the expense of justice is an illusion the DRC authorities must not fall for.” [...] ¹⁴²

Covering the period 16 March to 15 September 2020 a follow-up UN Secretary-General report stated:

[...] Attacks by armed groups against several FARDC positions in North Kivu were reported between 13 and 22 July [2020], resulting in the death of FARDC soldiers. The Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and some civil society groups attributed these attacks to former Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) members. The leadership of the group rejected the accusation but acknowledged the presence of former M23 elements in Rutshuru territory in North Kivu [...]

There were also allegations that local militias in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo might have received support from armed groups, notably from former M23 combatants.¹⁴³

4.10. Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) / Islamic State of Iraq and Syria – Democratic Republic of the Congo (ISIS-DRC)

This section should be read in conjunction with section [4.5. Allied Democratic Forces \(ADF\)](#).

In the first half of 2020 the UN report on the threat posed by ISIL (Da’esh) highlighted:

¹⁴¹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 19

¹⁴² Amnesty International, [DRC: One year since Tshisekedi took office, insecurity and impunity still imperil human rights](#), 24 January 2020

¹⁴³ UN Security Council, [Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region](#), 29 September 2020, paras. 15 and 17

In early 2020, ISCAP activities showed a consistent trend in attacks and modi operandi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. ISCAP operatives remained focused in their objective to establish a “caliphate”. Sustained government military operations targeting ISCAP operational bases in the region of Beni led to a loss of equipment and the arrest of some operatives. Following ISCAP displacement from some of its bases, one Member State reported movement towards the north-eastern Province of Ituri where several attacks were reported and several operatives affiliated to ISCAP were arrested in May 2020. Undeterred by these losses, ISCAP was able to plan and execute attacks against government military forces and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to conduct reprisals against civilian populations. As ISCAP continues to mutate, Member States observed improved capabilities, including the use of asymmetrical methods of attack, media output and improvised explosive devices.¹⁴⁴

During the second half of 2020 the UN report noted:

ISCAP in the Democratic Republic of Congo continued to deploy advanced capabilities during several attacks in Beni and other locations in North Kivu and Ituri Provinces. ISCAP bolstered operations by carrying out, with modest success, attacks on hard military targets during which it confiscated weaponry and armaments from the Congolese military. The group sought to occupy more locations and establish new bases. Member States observed a new trend as ISCAP used conventional weaponry and improvised explosive devices. In October [2020], it launched an onslaught on the Kangbaya central prison in Beni to release its operatives. Over 1,000 prisoners reportedly escaped, including about 200 ISCAP operatives and enablers.¹⁴⁵

In March 2021 the U.S. Department of State added ISCAP to “its list of designated terrorist organizations”, as well as the leader of “IS Congo”, Musa Baluku, to its list as “specially designated global terrorists”.¹⁴⁶ The U.S. Department of State further “confirmed that the group formerly known as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) is the Islamic State’s official representative” and “responsible for many attacks across North Kivu and Ituri Provinces in eastern DRC”, killing “over 849 civilians in 2020 alone”.¹⁴⁷

Following the designation, the International Crisis Group reported that “U.S. officials allege that [...] the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in the DRC [...] have become Islamic State (ISIS) franchises. It refers to them as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria – Democratic Republic of the Congo (ISIS-DRC) [...]” and comes “amid expressions of increasing alarm in Washington that despite the end of ISIS’s physical caliphate in the Levant, the group could be gaining influence elsewhere, especially in Africa”.¹⁴⁸ The same source further noted:

Since 2019, ISIS has stated that its “Central Africa Province” includes parts of the DRC and Mozambique, where it says it has developed alliances with local armed groups, including the ADF and ASWJ [Ahlu Sunna Wal Jammah].¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ UN Security Council, [*Eleventh report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL \(Da’esh to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat*](#), 4 August 2020, para. 20

¹⁴⁵ UN Security Council, [*Twelfth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL \(Da’esh to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat*](#), 29 January 2021, para. 31

¹⁴⁶ Long War Journal, [*State Department designates Islamic State in DRC, Moambique*](#), 11 March 2021

¹⁴⁷ Long War Journal, [*State Department designates Islamic State in DRC, Moambique*](#), 11 March 2021

¹⁴⁸ International Crisis Group, [*Understanding the New U.S. Terrorism Designations in Africa*](#), 18 March 2021

¹⁴⁹ International Crisis Group, [*Understanding the New U.S. Terrorism Designations in Africa*](#), 18 March 2021

5. Ethnic Groups

5.1. Real or Imputed Linkages between Ethnic Groups and Armed Groups

The Kivu Security Tracker provided the following overview, especially in relation to South Kivu:

[...] the Hauts Plateaux of South Kivu, we observe a steep escalation of violence – which is not accompanied by a significant fragmentation: while conflict actors have multiplied to some extent, key protagonists also managed to gather belligerents into broader and seemingly – even if fairly decentralized – stable coalitions. [...] Portrayed as a sudden crisis by most international media in late 2019, the war on the Hauts Plateaux of South Kivu has been in the making since at least 2015, as local conflicts over customary power merged with regional power struggles, especially in the slipstream of Burundi’s 2015 political crisis. Regional involvement, coupled with opportunism by politicians on all sides, fueled renewed debate over the purported “balkanization” of the Congo in late 2019, laying the groundwork for more violence throughout 2020. Yet despite the widespread framing of the crisis as either ethnic conflict among so-called autochthonous and allochthonous populations or foreign usurpation, the underlying reasons for violence on the Hauts Plateaux are complex and diverse. In most recent incarnation of violence, stakeholders from all ethnic communities can be found in equal measure amongst victims and instigators. While armed groups recruit along ethnic lines – the Gumino mobilizing among the Banyamulenge, the Mai-Mai Yakutumba and the Biloze Bishambuke drawing on Bembe, Fuliuro and Nyindu support – this is a consequence, not a cause of conflict. As in other places marked by contested authority, political and military leaders in the Hauts Plateaux build on ethnic framings and histories of belonging to rally populations and combatants. Explanations privileging an “ethnic grid become self-fulfilling prophecies,”¹⁵⁰ complicating our ability to unearth the multiple causes of conflict and violence. A closer look at the Haut Plateaux reveals that intracommunity tensions are as common as intercommunity ones. Skirmishes occur between armed groups purportedly defending the same (Banyamulenge) community, such as between the Twigwaneho – now backed by renegade Colonel Michel Rukunda – and the Gumino, while succession conflicts within customary entities have pitted Fuliuro or Bembe against each other. Moreover, and despite high levels of insecurity, numerous places of cohabitation between Bembe, Fuliuro, Vira, Nyindu, Banyamulenge and Mbuti still exist – even though it has ended in specific localities. Complex coalitions, often based on the logic of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” have triggered a concatenation of alliances and contributed to antagonizing and militarizing communities and their associated armed groups. The military involvement of Rwanda and Burundi has complicated this further. As parts of the Burundian armed opposition chose Uvira and Fizi as rear bases for organizing resistance, they entered into alliances of convenience in the sprawling landscape of armed groups in the Ruzizi Plain. At the same time, the Burundian army (and its imbonerakure proxy forces) intensified their incursions on Congolese soil, often working with militia in the Ruzizi Plain. Rwanda then backed the anti-Bujumbura forces, such as Résistance pour un état de droit (RED)-Tabara or the now defunct Forces républicaines du Burundi (FOREBU), while Rwandan opposition actors such as the Rwandan National Congress (RNC)/P5 formation or the Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie (CNRD) and its armed wing, the Forces de libération nationale (FLN), were suspected to have affinities with the government in Bujumbura.¹⁵⁰

According to the UN Secretary-General’s report, covering major events and developments between 29 June and 25 September 2019, in the Uvira and Fizi territories of South Kivu:

Intercommunal conflict between Banyamulenge groups, supported by the Gumino and Twigwaneho militias, and the Babembe, Bafuliru and Banyindu communities, supported by

¹⁵⁰ Kivu Security Tracker, [The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo: Missed Opportunities, Protracted Insecurity and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies](#), 28 February 2021

various Mai-Mai groups, resulted in serious human rights violations in the Minembwe area of Fizi territory.¹⁵¹

On Fizi and Uvira territories, between 29 September and 25 November 2019, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

Ethnically motivated violence against civilians on the high and middle plateaus of Fizi and Uvira territories remains a major source of concern, in particular in the Minembwe area. Since March 2019, Ngumino, Twigwaneho and Mai-Mai groups have killed at least 44 civilians and destroyed 89 villages. Worryingly, these attacks have targeted civilians on the basis of their perceived community affiliation, with the Banyamulenge particularly affected on one hand, and the Bafuliro, Babembe and Banyindu, on the other.¹⁵²

According to information by UNJHRO, as reported by the U.S. Department of State's annual report on human rights covering 2020:

As of June 30 [2020], violence attributed to various Lendu militias in Ituri Province resulted in at least 636 summary executions and an estimated 1.2 million internally displaced persons. Djugu-based assailants in Ituri Province were responsible for killing at least 525 individuals, largely during ambushes and attacks against villages targeting civilians.¹⁵³

Covering the period 16 March to 15 September 2020 a UN Secretary-General report stated:

In Ituri, a loosely defined group of elements based in the Djugu territory, including the Coopérative de Développement du Congo, an armed movement claiming to defend the Walendu ethnic group, launched several attacks on civilians, including members of the Wahema ethnic group.¹⁵⁴

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 19 September and 1 December 2020:

Mai-Mai and ADF activity continued in Irumu and Mambasa territories along the border areas of Ituri and North Kivu. The increased presence of those armed groups also fuelled underlying tensions between the Nande, Nyali and Hutu communities, who accuse one another of supporting the movement of those armed groups into the area.¹⁵⁵

6. Overview of the Security Situation, including conflict-related human rights violations

For specific information on conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related violence against children see sections [8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#) and [9. Children affected by the conflict](#).

¹⁵¹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 27 September 2019, para. 22

¹⁵² UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 26 November 2019, para. 17

¹⁵³ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 1. G. Abuses in internal conflict

¹⁵⁴ UN Security Council, [Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region](#), 29 September 2020, para. 17

¹⁵⁵ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 November 2020, para. 18

The [Kivu Security Tracker](#) is a useful tool developed jointly by the Congo Research group and Human Rights Watch to “map violence by state security forces and armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo to better understand trends, causes of insecurity and serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law”.¹⁵⁶ The website provides useful interactive maps and graphs, as well as irregular [monthly security reports](#).

The International Crisis Group also provides monthly updates on the security situation in the DRC through its *CrisisWatch*, which can be accessed [here](#). In the timeframe for this report, August 2019 to April 2021, for example it continuously described the volatile security situation in Eastern DRC, noting that violence “persisted” and fighting “escalated” in North and South Kivu, as well as in Ituri province.¹⁵⁷

ACLED further provides bi-monthly regional overviews on major security situations, which can be found [here](#) and a data export tool, which documents events by type and by country.

Note that the security events included below are not exhaustive and only represent a portion of the reporting on individual events.

In September 2019, the United Nations Security Council reported that:

[...] Intercommunal violence and armed group activity continued to claim the lives of numerous civilians, with an upsurge in incidents in some areas in the east of the country. Despite political commitments to address the causes of insecurity in Ituri Province, Djugu and Mahagi territories saw an increase in violence. Attacks on civilians also increased in the Grand Nord area of North Kivu Province, due to a resurgence of attacks by presumed members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Also in North Kivu, Masisi territory continued to be negatively affected by extensive armed group clashes, causing dozens of civilian deaths. Insecurity also persisted in Maniema, South Kivu and Tanganyika Provinces, but did not increase significantly.¹⁵⁸

Human Rights Watch documented “Attacks on Civilians by Armed Groups and Government Forces” which took place throughout 2019:

More than 130 armed groups were active in eastern Congo’s North Kivu and South Kivu provinces, attacking civilians. The groups included the largely Rwandan Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and allied Congolese Nyatura groups, the largely Ugandan Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Nduma Defense of Congo-Renové (NDC-R), the Mazembe and Yakatumba Mai Mai groups, and several Burundian armed groups. Many of their commanders have been implicated in war crimes, including ethnic massacres, rape, forced recruitment of children, and pillage. [...] ¹⁵⁹

Reporting on 2019, the Kivu Security Tracker reported that:

[...] There was some momentum in this direction during the early days of Tshisekedi’s presidency in 2019, when significant numbers of combatants in the Kivus and Kasais came

¹⁵⁶ Kivu Security Tracker, [About Us](#), Undated [Last accessed: 17 July 2018]

¹⁵⁷ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch](#), Undated [Last accessed: 7 July 2021 with filters August 2019-July 2021 and DRC]

¹⁵⁸ United Nations Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 27 September 2019

¹⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2020](#) [Events in 2019], 2020

forward to volunteer for demobilization, motivated by the promise for political change under the new president. Along with other factors, this led to a momentous drop in the number of armed groups active in the Kivus. [...] Combatants regrouped in the Kivus' two main transit centers – Mubambiro in North Kivu and Nyamunyuni in South Kivu – ended up either being sent to the Kamina and Kitona FARDC bases for army integration, returning en bloc to their former fiefdoms, or defecting one-by-one to try to make a living in cities, often as motorcycle taxi drivers or security guards. Other armed groups or individual combatants did not even reach Mubambiro or Nyamunyuni but simply hid or sold their weapons and returned to civilian life. This kind of self-demobilization has always been a widespread phenomenon, even if largely ignored by key donors. [...] ¹⁶⁰

GlobalSecurity.org documented the following militia attacks in the DRC in October 2019:

Months of unrelenting militia attacks in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo are driving more people from their homes, adding to the millions already displaced and threatening to spread insecurity elsewhere in Africa's Great Lakes region, observers warn.

This week, people fleeing the conflict lugged small children and possessions as they trekked across the DRC's eastern border into Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.

They fault the Mai Mai, a general name for the scores of armed fighting groups that have engaged in ethnic clashes for decades. Since May, attackers have burned about 160 villages of Banyamulenge ethnic Tutsis, killed at least 200 people, stolen cattle that provide their livelihoods, and forced more than 200,000 to flee, according to Congo Today, a nonprofit group that promotes peace and reconciliation among Congolese tribes.

"They say they do not want to see people of our ethnic background," a Congolese Tutsi woman told VOA on Monday as she tried to quiet her wailing children. She said they had walked for two weeks to reach safety in the southern Uganda town of Bunagana.

"We are innocent; we have done nothing against them," said the woman, who did not wish to disclose her identity. "They say that they do not want to hear us speak in this language; that we are not Congolese."

Uganda appeals for help

The U.N. Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates that 4.5 million people are displaced in the DRC's Kasai, Tanganyika, Ituri and Kivu regions, with "hundreds of thousands more" fleeing to Angola, Zambia and other neighboring countries. ¹⁶¹

Covering the period 1 September 2019 to 15 March 2020 a UN Secretary-General report stated with regards to the security situation in eastern DRC:

During the period under review, the security situation in the region remained fragile, with continued challenges in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Military operations by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) against armed groups in North and South Kivu provinces were stepped up, in line with the commitment made by the President, Félix Tshisekedi, to deliver peace and stability, particularly in the east of the country. In North Kivu, the military offensive by FARDC against foreign and national armed groups appeared to have contributed to their weakening. However, increased retaliatory attacks by suspected elements of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) have resulted in a deterioration of the security situation in that area. Meanwhile, allegations of cross-border security incidents continued to fuel tension among neighbouring countries in the region [...]

On 30 October [2019, FARDC launched military operations in North Kivu province that resulted in the capture of several ADF bases and the reported death of about 80 ADF combatants. Around 60 FARDC soldiers were reported to have lost their lives during the operations, while

¹⁶⁰ Kivu Security Tracker, [The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo: Missed Opportunities, Protracted Insecurity and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies](#), 28 February 2021

¹⁶¹ GlobalSecurity.org, [DRC Unrest Sparks Concerns of Regional Refugee Crisis](#), 29 October 2019

another 175 were wounded. Despite the progress achieved by FARDC, suspected ADF elements continued to carry out attacks, especially in the Beni area in North Kivu. An attack on 28 December [2019] resulted in the killing of 18 civilians in Apetina, Beni territory, significantly raising the number of civilians killed by the armed group during the reporting period. Furthermore, the situation in Ituri deteriorated as a result of the movement of dispersed ADF members from the Beni area into Irumu and Mambasa territories and subsequent attacks against civilians. It is estimated that some 250,000 civilians have been displaced since the beginning of 2020 owing to this development.¹⁶²

The U.S. Department of State's annual report on human rights reported that in 2020, "Conflicts continued in some of the eastern and northern provinces, particularly North Kivu, South Kivu [...] Ituri", causing "significant population displacement and led to many human rights abuses, especially in Ituri and North Kivu Provinces".¹⁶³

Amnesty International reported in its annual report covering 2020 on armed conflict and inter-communal violence continuing in areas of North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri provinces:

[...] Armed conflict and inter-communal violence continued in areas of South Kivu, North Kivu and Ituri provinces in the east and led to the deaths of hundreds of people. Attacks by armed groups forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes. According to the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO), in the first half of the year, combatants from all armed groups carried out summary executions in which around 1,315 people, including 267 women and 165 children, were killed. [...] government forces were accused of killing 14 civilians and injuring 49 others in the first half of the year. [...]¹⁶⁴

Also reporting on developments in 2020, the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research noted:

[...] Various militias continued to operate in North and South Kivu [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)]. An internal split within one of the most active groups, Nduma Defence of Congo-Renovated (NDC-R), also led to new inter-group alliances and fighting. Overall, more than 1,000 people were killed and accommodation, livestock, and infrastructure were destroyed. The Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC) reportedly employed members of NDC-R to push the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and the National Council for Renewal and Democracy (CNRD) out of North and South Kivu [→ DR Congo, Rwanda (FDLR, CNRD)]. Although FDLR and CNRD activity significantly decreased, violent attacks continued, including frequent incidents of sexual violence. [...] Throughout the year, over 1,000 people were killed by armed groups operating in North and South Kivu. [...] Throughout the year, FARDC continued operations against FDLR and CNRD. In the first half of the year, FARDC operations in South Kivu dislodged CNRD from Kalehe. CNRD leadership lost command and control of their organization, leaving fighters and dependents scattered across Kalehe, Mwenga, Walungu, and Uvira territories, in addition to hundreds being repatriated to Rwanda. To combat FDLR and CNRD, FARDC reportedly employed members of the armed group Nduma Defence of Congo-Renovated (NDC-R) [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)] as a proxy to push FDLR and CNRD out of North and South Kivu. While the NDC-R ran the bulk of fighting against FDLR allies, the FARDC launched a series of operations in North and South Kivu, allegedly involving

¹⁶² UN Security Council, [Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region](#), 3 April 2020, paras. 2 and 3

¹⁶³ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 1. G, Abuses in internal conflict

¹⁶⁴ Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Report 2020/21, The State of the World's Human Rights](#), 7 April 2021

small, rotating detachments of Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF). Both Rwanda and DRC denied Rwandan involvement in FARDC operations. [...] ¹⁶⁵

Human Rights Watch reported specifically on attacks on civilians by armed groups and government forces:

[...] Non-state armed groups and government forces killed at least 1,300 civilians in separate conflicts between October 2019 and June 2020, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Hundreds more were killed in the second half of the year. In many instances, armed assailants were responsible for sexual violence against women and girls. More than 130 armed groups were active in eastern Congo's North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri provinces, attacking civilians. The groups included the mainly ethnic Lendu association of militia Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO); the largely Ugandan Allied Democratic Forces (ADF); the Nduma Defense of Congo-Renové (NDC-R); the largely Rwandan Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and allied Congolese Nyatura groups; the Mazembe and Yakutumba Mai Mai groups; and several Burundian armed groups. Many of their commanders have been implicated in war crimes, including ethnic massacres, rape, forced recruitment of children, and pillage. The Congolese security forces conducted simultaneous operations against armed groups in eastern Congo, with mixed results and at times using militia as proxy forces against other groups. According to the Kivu Security Tracker, which documents violence in eastern Congo, assailants, including state security forces, killed more than 1,250 civilians and kidnapped for ransom more than 450 others in North Kivu and South Kivu. [...] ¹⁶⁶

Also covering the year 2020 between January and September 2020 with regards to civilian deaths in the two Kivus, the Kivu Security Tracker summarised the monthly fluctuation of civilians killed as follows [Note that previous figures were included to provide a more comprehensive picture]:

June 2017 – June 2019: "Armed groups in Democratic Republic of Congo 's eastern Kivu provinces have killed 1,900 civilians and abducted more than 3,300 others [...] The Kivu Security Tracker logged more than 3,000 violent incidents by more than 130 armed groups"

November 2019: KST "recorded the death of 182 civilians in November, the deadliest month since our tracking began in June 2017"

December 2019: "December 2019 was the deadliest month for civilian deaths ever recorded by the Kivu Security Tracker since its creation in June 2017. Armed groups and security forces killed at least 197 civilians over the course of the last 31 days of 2019. This unprecedented death toll was logged at a time when November 2019 also saw record numbers of civilian deaths"

January 2020: "the number of those killed by armed actors increased again in January 2020, with 210 violent deaths recorded. That makes this month the deadliest since the Kivu Security Tracker (KST) started keeping records in June 2017"

February 2020: "In February 2020, armed actors killed 57 civilians in Masisi territory. This is a record for this territory since the Kivu Security Tracker (KST) started tracking such data. This number even surpasses that of Beni territory for the same period, something unprecedented since September 2019"

¹⁶⁵ Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, [Conflict Barometer 2020](#), 2021 [Analyzed Period: 01/01/20 – 12/31/20]

¹⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2021](#) [Events of 2020], 2021

March 2020: “There was a marked drop in the number of civilians killed by armed actors in the month of March. The Kivu Security Tracker (KST) recorded 47 such deaths, compared with 156 the previous month. The number of clashes between armed actors remained at levels similar to last month (48 compared with 51) and 170 abductions were recorded”

April 2020: “After a particularly calm month of March for civilians in the Kivus, abuses sadly returned to previous levels: 85 civilian deaths carried out by armed actors were recorded in April, a number close to the monthly average since June 2017 (88)”

May 2020: “The number of civilians killed by armed actors increased significantly in May with 125 people killed compared to the 85 people killed in April. This toll is substantially higher than the monthly average of 92 deaths since June 2017”

June 2020: “Insecurity continued to be of concern in the Kivus in June 2020. The Kivu Security Tracker recorded the deaths of 108 civilians during incidents caused by armed actors. This is slightly less than the month of May, yet remains higher than the historic average, established since KST started collecting such data in June 2017. As for the number of clashes, this has remained stable (64 compared with 65 the previous month) but also remains higher than the average (52)”

July/August 2020: “After a particularly violent month of July, the Kivu Security Tracker (KST) recorded a drop in the number of incidents in August”

September 2020: “Despite a slight fall in the number of clashes and civilians killed, abducted, and kidnapped compared to August, the level of violence remained high in September, well above historical monthly averages since the Kivu Security Tracker (KST) started collecting such data in June 2017”.¹⁶⁷

Also referring to human rights violations throughout 2020 as documented and confirmed by the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO), its analysis for the year found:

In 2020, the UNJHRO documented 7.909 human rights violations and abuses throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which represents an average of 659 human rights violations per month. This is a significant increase (+21%) compared to 2019 and a reversal of the trend of the previous year, which recorded a decrease of 4%. The figures recorded are higher than those documented during the election year (6,814 violations and abuses in 2018). This increase reflects a deterioration of the security situation in the provinces affected by armed conflict, in particular North Kivu, Ituri and South Kivu where the UNJHRO recorded a sharp increase of about 46% of the number of abuses committed by armed groups.

Djugu-based armed assailants in Ituri province, combatants of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), Nduma Defense of Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) and Nyatura in the province of North Kivu continued to attack civilians in their farms, homes and roads, expanding the geographic areas where they usually operate.¹⁶⁸

The same report further highlighted:

The efforts of the authorities and other stakeholders have not been sufficient to stem the persistent armed conflicts fueled by inter-community tensions, land conflicts, looting, the illegal exploitation of natural resources and control of territories to impose illegal taxes. In the absence of a coordinated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration program allowing combatants of armed groups to lay down their weapons and join civilian life, and given the

¹⁶⁷ Kivu Security Tracker, [Reports](#), Undated [Various reports summarised on this webpage; last accessed: 7 July 2021]

¹⁶⁸ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UNJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, para. 2

lack of guarantees of non-repetition resulting from a transitional justice mechanism combining reconciliation and fight against impunity, violence worsened in the provinces affected by armed conflict, leading millions of Congolese to seek refuge in foreign countries or to move, in precarious conditions, to other areas deemed safe.¹⁶⁹

The report further specified:

In 2020, nearly 93% of the violations documented by the UNJHRO were committed in the provinces affected by conflict (7,393 violations), resulting in at least 2,811 civilian deaths, including 548 women. As in the previous year, the main perpetrators of these violations in 2020 are armed groups (59%). More than half of the violations committed in the provinces affected by conflict (51%) were recorded in North Kivu alone (3,746 violations), followed by Ituri (1,206 violations), South Kivu (802 violations), Tanganyika (582 violations) and Kasai (403 violations).¹⁷⁰

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering 25 April 2020 to 19 November 2020: “the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo was characterized by pockets of intense violence”.¹⁷¹

ACLED reported in February 2020 on ADF attacks in Ituri and North Kivu: “[...] allied Defence Forces (ADF) attacks were reported in both Mambasa territory in Ituri and Beni territory in North Kivu, resulting in the deaths of at least seven civilians. [...]”.¹⁷² The same source reported further on militant insurgencies in Ituri, Kongo-Central and North Kivu in April 2020:

[...] Last week in Africa, the ongoing coronavirus pandemic prompted a diverse range of demonstration activity, particularly centered on inadequate domestic distribution of food. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), state forces were faced with fighting on multiple fronts, with active militant insurgencies in Ituri, Kongo-Central and North Kivu. [...].¹⁷³

In May 2020, Brookings reported on attacks carried out by the armed group CODECO and the UN’s response:

[...] Also in northeastern DRC, attacks linked mostly to the CODECO (Cooperative for the Development of Congo) rebel group, whose members are primarily drawn from the Lendu ethnic group, killed at least 296 in the six months prior to April 2020. The United Nations stated this week that these attacks—which include “widespread and systematic killings, beheadings, rape, and other barbaric acts”—may constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. Northeastern DRC, which is rich in natural resources including gold, diamonds, oil, and coltan, has been the site of power struggles between rebel groups and ethnic violence for decades.¹⁷⁴

Covering the period 16 March to 15 September 2020 a follow-up UN Secretary-General report stated:

¹⁶⁹ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, para. 3

¹⁷⁰ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, para. 13

¹⁷¹ UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 23 December 2020, Summary

¹⁷² Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview: Africa 23-29 February 2020](#), 4 March 2020

¹⁷³ Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview: Africa 19-25 April 2020](#), 29 April 2020

¹⁷⁴ Brookings, [Africa in the news: COVID-19, DRC, and African Development Bank updates](#), 30 May 2020

In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, armed groups continued to perpetrate attacks on civilians, despite continuing military operations by FARDC and the resultant weakening of some foreign and local armed groups. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) extended their activities into Ituri, while attempting to regain positions in North Kivu that they had lost during FARDC operations in October 2019. Between 14 May and 22 June [2020], ADF killed over 60 civilians and four soldiers, mainly in Irumu and Djugu territories in Ituri, while over 40 people, including a United Nations peacekeeper, were killed by suspected ADF elements between 5 April and 23 June [2020] in North Kivu [...]

FARDC operations targeting a main stronghold of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) in Kazaroho, in North Kivu, further weakened the group. This development followed the killing or arrest of some leaders of Rwandan armed groups. FDLR-FOCA is believed, however, to have retained operational capacity and influence with local militias, as exemplified by an attack on 24 April by suspected FDLR elements in Virunga National Park, which killed 13 game park rangers and four civilians [...]

Attacks by armed groups against several FARDC positions in North Kivu were reported between 13 and 22 July [2020], resulting in the death of FARDC soldiers. The Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and some civil society groups attributed these attacks to former Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) members. The leadership of the group rejected the accusation but acknowledged the presence of former M23 elements in Rutshuru territory in North Kivu [...]

Local armed groups remained agents of instability, causing widespread violations of human rights and insecurity in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Continued violence was observed in Ituri and South Kivu, with cross-border implications for regional peace and security. In Ituri, a loosely defined group of elements based in the Djugu territory, including the Coopérative de Développement du Congo, an armed movement claiming to defend the Walendu ethnic group, launched several attacks on civilians, including members of the Wahema ethnic group. In South Kivu, clashes between FARDC and local armed groups, and inter-communal violence, were recorded, despite a ceasefire agreement signed between the communities on 13 March. There were also allegations that local militias in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo might have received support from armed groups, notably from former M23 combatants.¹⁷⁵

In August 2020, Al Jazeera summarised the findings in a report published by the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) which said:

[...] fighters of all armed groups were responsible for the summary executions or arbitrary killings of at least 1,315 people, including 165 children, between January and June 2020. That was more than three times the 416 such deaths recorded in the first half of last year. The UNJHRO attributed the jump to the “deterioration” in the human rights situation in provinces where conflict is rife, particularly Ituri, South Kivu, Tanganyika and North Kivu. [...] Violence in the gold mining region of Ituri has raged since December 2017. The flare-up has pitched the Hema ethnic group, who are predominantly herders, against the Lendu community, who are mostly sedentary farmers. The UN has warned that some of the latest attacks could amount to crimes against humanity. As in Ituri, civilians are caught up in escalating conflicts in the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu and the southeastern province of Tanganyika. At the end of October 2019, the army launched operations against all armed groups in the eastern part of the country. Despite those offensives, however, the killings of civilians have not ceased. The UNJHRO report also noted that the number of violations committed by state agents decreased slightly during the first half of the year. State agents were responsible for 43

¹⁷⁵ UN Security Council, [*Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region*](#), 29 September 2020, paras. 13-15 and 17

percent of documented human rights violations, including the extrajudicial executions of at least 225 people, including 18 children, throughout the DRC, according to the report.¹⁷⁶

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering November 2020 to 23rd April 2021:

Perpetual violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to be borne by the civilian population, who manifested their desperation in part through mob violence and demonstrations against the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the international community and the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, notably since March 2021. Armed groups continued to operate with near impunity in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo during the reporting period.¹⁷⁷

In March 2021, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that since October 2020 the situation in eastern DRC – notably North and South Kivu, and Ituri provinces – has continued to worsen:

Our staff have continued to conduct investigations in areas suffering the ravages of armed groups. The scale of the violence in the east of the DRC is alarming. In 2020, the Office verified the killing of at least 2,945 civilians, including 553 women and 286 children. During 2020, 21% more human rights violations were documented than in 2019. Violations were committed by a range of armed groups operating in vast areas where there is little or no presence of Congolese authorities, as well as by the Congolese military and police force. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office has issued five public reports on this deteriorating situation over the last 12 months. This year, an update on the situation in Ituri published in January reported the killing of 647 civilians between May and December 2020 in the context of the inter-community violence. An update on the area targeted by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in North Kivu that was published in February, reported a further 468 civilians killed between July and December 2020. The ADF were also responsible for at least 457 enforced disappearances last year.¹⁷⁸

On 30th April 2021 President Felix Tshisekedi declared a state of siege in Ituri and North Kivu Provinces following a “surge in attacks by armed militias and inter-communal violence in the east” killing “more than 300 people” since the start of 2021.¹⁷⁹

The Kivu Security Tracker found that since the announcement “the number of civilians killed [in those two provinces] markedly increased” in May 2021.¹⁸⁰ It summarised the situation as follows:

Most of this increase occurred in three neighboring territories: Beni, Irumu, and Mambasa, where a total of 181 civilian deaths were recorded. The Boga and Tchabi killings during the night of May 30 to 31 played a significant role in this death toll, since they account for the deaths of 55 civilians--the deadliest night ever recorded by KST.

It may be that some of these killings were due to a reaction by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) to the announcement of a state of siege. In the past, this group, the deadliest in eastern DRC, has reacted to the launch of military operations against it by retaliating against civilians.

¹⁷⁶ Al Jazeera, [DRC armed groups killed 1,300 in first half of 2020, says UN](#), 5 August 2020

¹⁷⁷ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 10 June 2021, *Summary*

¹⁷⁸ OHCHR, [High Commissioner's oral update on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 22 March 2021

¹⁷⁹ Reuters, [DR Congo declares state of siege over eastern bloodshed](#), 1 May 2021

¹⁸⁰ Kivu Security Tracker, [Uptick in killings after state of siege announced, monthly report No 43 – May 2021](#), May 2021, p. 1

As regards the FARDC, this first month of the state of siege was essentially used to place new military authorities at the head of the provinces, territories, and towns of North Kivu and Ituri, as well as to rotate officers heading several FARDC units. This did not lead to an immediate and significant increase in the intensity of the FARDC's operations against armed groups (their involvement was recorded in 37 clashes in May for the whole area, compared with 36 in April). Nevertheless, the FARDC was implicated in many more civilian deaths in May: 36 (in 19 incidents), compared with 17 (in 12 incidents) in April [2021].

The situation also deteriorated in the territories of Fizi and Uvira, in South Kivu, a province unaffected by the state of siege, where there was a marked uptick in kidnappings for ransom and abductions. The continuing attacks against villages mostly populated by the Banyamulenge may suggest that forced displacement is at play in the area.

However, as a whole, the state of siege also coincided with a relative drop in the number of clashes between armed groups and in the victims of kidnappings for ransom and abductions. This has been fairly well distributed (it has occurred across each of the three provinces monitored by KST). It is possible that, despite the absence of an increase in the number of FARDC operations, the announcement of a state of siege has resulted in a wait-and-see approach, redeployments, or tactical changes by some armed groups to adapt to the new situation. Djugu territory, the deadliest of all in April, saw a genuine respite, especially along National Road 27 (RN27). However, such relative and localized progress did not go hand in hand with the mass arrest or surrender of members of armed groups. This raises concerns that such progress will not be long-lasting.¹⁸¹

6.1. North Kivu

This section provides a broad overview of insecurity in the province. The security events included below are not exhaustive and only represent a portion of the reporting on individual events.

August – December 2019

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 29 June and 25 September 2019:

The security situation in the Grand Nord deteriorated during the reporting period, with a notable increase in attacks on civilians in Beni territory. Alleged ADF members killed at least 36 civilians and abducted dozens more in 26 attacks. By contrast, there was a decrease in ADF attacks against the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC). [...] Mai-Mai groups also continued to attack civilians, Ebola response centres and FARDC, in particular in the Butembo and Lubero areas, with 25 attacks recorded during the reporting period, of which 12 were against civilians, 7 against the FARDC and 6 against Ebola virus disease centres.¹⁸²

With regards to the situation in Masisi territory, the same report stated:

the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) armed group continued to pose a significant threat to the safety and security of civilians. The group is known to have carried out summary executions of civilians, rape, unlawful imprisonment and the imposition and collection of illegal taxes. The strategy of NDC-R to extend its area of control beyond Masisi and Walikale territories, in particular into Rutshuru territory, led to violent confrontations with other local armed groups. The clashes resulted in the killing of at least 60 civilians and caused large - scale

¹⁸¹ Kivu Security Tracker, [Uptick in killings after state of siege announced, monthly report No 43 – May 2021](#), May 2021, p. 1-2

¹⁸² UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 27 September 2019, para. 19

displacement. Up to 25 schools remain closed in Masisi territory owing to insecurity, leaving approximately 3,000 students without access to education.¹⁸³

In September 2019 ACLED documented an attack by an armed group in North Kivu:

[...] In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a significant attack took place in Kitchanga town of North Kivu state during the past week. Although reports state that the army of DRC repelled an attack by Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) on 14 September [2019], Islamic State also claimed responsibility of the attack on the following day for its 'Central Africa' branch. Another significant development is a series of attacks in Ituri province, conducted by suspected CODECO (Cooperative for Development of Congo) militia. Dozens of civilian casualties were reported while MONUSCO (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo) is reported to have repulsed some of the attacks. CODECO is mostly comprised of Lendu ethnic community, and have long been active in Djugu territory of Ituri state (ACLED Regional Overview, Africa, 9 July 2019). Violence in the region has caused displacement of over 10,000 people. [...]¹⁸⁴

Reporting on developments in North Kivu between 29 September and 25 November 2019, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) remain a serious threat to peace and security in Beni Territory and were responsible for the killing of dozens of civilians during the reporting period. On 30 October [2019], following the announcement of unilateral operations against all armed groups in the country, FARDC launched a military offensive against ADF in the area north of Beni after concentrating more than 20,000 troops in the town and along key roads during the preceding weeks. While several bouts of heavy fighting were observed and FARDC indicated that it had taken over a number of strategic positions, ADF followed a tactic of deliberate attacks against civilians in order to undermine the offensive, with a spike in brutal attacks occurring during the second half of November [2019]. Preliminary reports put the number of civilians killed in ADF incursions since 31 October [2019] at more than 80, more than half of whom were women and children [...]

Previously, in October [2019], a total of 10 attacks had resulted in the killing of 22 civilians and the abduction of at least 17 more. Four assaults were recorded against Congolese security forces during the same month, reportedly resulting in the killing of 7 FARDC soldiers. ADF members also attacked MONUSCO military personnel at the Semuliki base on 25 and 29 October [2019]. On 27 October [2019], during a patrol on the road linking Mavivi and Oicha, United Nations peacekeepers were caught in an ambush and returned fire.¹⁸⁵

In November 2019 ACLED documented the estimated number of deaths of unarmed civilians in North Kivu:

[...] In DRC's North Kivu province, an estimated 55 unarmed civilians were killed in several attacks attributed to local armed groups, most notably the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). These events sparked violent riots in the cities of Beni, Butembo and Goma where residents and LUCHA affiliates – a Goma-based civil society group – assaulted the offices of the local government and the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO), accused of not doing enough to protect civilians. Amid rising insecurity, the World Health Organization evacuated several

¹⁸³ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 27 September 2019, para. 19

¹⁸⁴ Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview – Africa 25 September 2019](#), 25 September 2019

¹⁸⁵ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 26 November 2019, paras. 13 and 14

Ebola responders, four of which were killed in two separate attacks attributed to Mayi-Mayi militias in North Kivu and Ituri provinces. [...] ¹⁸⁶

The same source also reported on the following attack carried out by the AFD in North Kivu in December 2019:

[...] In North Kivu, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) continued a campaign of targeted attacks on civilians. Two such attacks, on December 15 and December 29, resulted in the reported deaths of 12 and 18 civilians respectively. [...] ¹⁸⁷

In November 2019 MONUSCO reported that “Angry residents torched the town hall and the UN compound in the city of Beni, in North Kivu, protesting what they saw as the failure by Government forces and peacekeepers to prevent a deadly weekend attack by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebel group” which saw in the past month “around 14 attacks, with some 80 people killed in a region that currently is facing the worst Ebola outbreak in the nation’s history”. ¹⁸⁸

In December 2019 ACLED reported on the following conflict activity in the Beni region:

[...] The epicenter of conflict activity in DRC continues to be the North Kivu province, where the Congolese army and the UN peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO) have failed to prevent the spiralling of violence in the region. Last week, attacks attributed to the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) near Beni killed at least 29 civilians, sparking a wave of strikes and demonstrations across the region and the whole country demanding MONUSCO to leave. Amid these increasing tensions between local communities and international actors, Mayi-Mayi militiamen raided an Ebola response center and an MSF clinic in Biakato destroying their facilities. ACLED has recorded more than 30 attacks targeting aid workers since the beginning of the year, 80% of which in the eastern provinces of Ituri and North Kivu only. ¹⁸⁹

The same source further noted:

[...] In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) continue to attack villages in the region of Beni, further exposing the endemic insecurity plaguing the area. Machete-wielding militiamen killed an estimated 16 people, although the toll might be higher. Another militia known as Cooperative for Development of Congo (CODECO) killed an additional 9 people in Ituri, abducting many others. ¹⁹⁰

Following an independent assessment of MONUSCO’s response to the “high number of attacks against civilians allegedly committed by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in Beni territory, North Kivu Province” during 30 October and 31 December 2019, the independent assessment found that:

¹⁸⁶ Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview: Africa 24-30 November 2019](#), 3 December 2019

¹⁸⁷ Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview: Africa 15 December 2019 – 4 January 2020](#), 10 January 2020

¹⁸⁸ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), [UN working to prevent attacks on civilians in Eastern DR Congo](#), 29 November 2019

¹⁸⁹ Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview: Africa 1-7 December 2019](#), 10 December 2019

¹⁹⁰ Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview: Africa 8-14 December 2019](#), 16 December 2019

in the months of November and December [2019] alone, over 260 civilians, mainly women and children, were killed, by presumed ADF combatants in brutal attacks, mostly at night. The high number of civilian casualties was one of the main triggers of violent demonstrations against MONUSCO in North Kivu, including the destruction and looting of a MONUSCO Office in Beni on 25 November [2019]. The attacks against civilians occurred against the backdrop of a major offensive that the Congolese Army launched against the ADF on 30 October 2019. Since 2014, the ADF have systematically retaliated against civilians to thwart the Congolese army's operations against them.¹⁹¹

On Masisi and Rutshuru territories, between 29 September and 25 November 2019, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

In Masisi Territory and surrounding areas, the Nduma défense du CongoRénové (NDC-R) has continued to expand its area of control, resulting in a climate of impunity for human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence. Frequent clashes between NDC-R and the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS), the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and Nyatura armed groups have further increased insecurity and led to the killing of at least 46 civilians, the rape of 18 women and the displacement of civilians. FARDC launched military operations against armed groups in Masisi on 6 October [2019]. While APCLS, FDLR and Nyatura appeared to be the initial targets, some clashes were also reported with NDC-R later in the month.

In Rutshuru Territory, FDLR remains a major concern as it continued to carry out violations and exactions against civilians. On 10 November [2019], FARDC announced that Musabimana Juvenal, the leader of the FDLR splinter group Rassemblement pour l'unité et la démocratie-Urunana, had been killed in an operation. A rise in the number of security incidents in which humanitarian actors are being targeted has been reported in North Kivu, notably in Masisi and Rutshuru territories.¹⁹²

Reporting on developments in the DRC between 26 November 2019 and 16 March 2020, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

The rise in attacks against civilians resulted in strong sentiments among some members of the local population against MONUSCO and the Congolese authorities, with demonstrators violently protesting the Mission's perceived lack of effective action in preventing attacks by ADF. On 25 November 2019, the MONUSCO Boikene office, in Beni town, was looted and destroyed by a hostile crowd. No MONUSCO personnel were injured in the incident. Protests against the Mission continued throughout November and December [2019] throughout North Kivu Province and in particular the Beni and Butembo areas, with the protesters demanding its departure. In response, MONUSCO increased its outreach to civil society and community representatives. In addition, the Mission's leadership engaged political leaders, including Mr. Tshisekedi, and addressed the country's Security Council to enhance cooperation between MONUSCO and FARDC and jointly improve the protection of civilians in the Beni area.¹⁹³

Human Rights Watch, basing the following on documented violence by the Kivu Security Tracker directed against civilians noted that:

¹⁹¹ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), [*Independent assessment of MONUSCO's response to recent attacks against civilians in Beni area, DRC*](#), 22 January 2020

¹⁹² UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 26 November 2019, para. 15

¹⁹³ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 18 March 2020, para. 16

[...] According to the Kivu Security Tracker, which documents violence in eastern Congo, assailants, including state security forces, killed at least 720 civilians and abducted or kidnapped for ransom more than 1,275 others in North Kivu and South Kivu in 2019. [...] ¹⁹⁴

The Guardian reported in December 2019:

The men who came to the village of Ntombi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in mid-December aimed to spare no one. Militants with the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), one of dozens of armed groups operating in DRC's North Kivu, they hacked to death women and children, killing 22 people in a single incident in one of a series of attacks over the course of a weekend that left 43 dead in total. The consequence of the attack, one of several in a spike of violence in DRC, are profound: occurring at a moment when health officials believed they were close to finally bringing the country's 16-month long Ebola virus outbreak under control. [...] The massacre at Ntombi followed hard on the heels of a pair of lethal attacks on health workers at the end of November, variously blamed on the ADF and the Mai Mai armed militia, in Mangina and in the sensitive Biakato Mines region. The attacks forced the evacuation of many staff involved in the Ebola effort. The chain of circumstances at least partly responsible for the spike in unrest is also familiar. Faced with a new operation by DRC government forces, targeting the ADF around Beni, the group replied with attacks targeting civilians. The motives behind other attacks, however, including the attack on the health team at the Biakato Mines, remain murky. ¹⁹⁵

2020

The U.S. Department of State's annual report on human rights reported that in 2020, "In North Kivu Province, the NDC-R, Mai Mai Mazembe, ADF, FDLR, as well as a host of smaller armed groups fought among themselves and caused significant population displacements as they fought over territory. There were reports some elements within the FARDC collaborated with some factions of the NDC-R". ¹⁹⁶

Similarly, the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research reported on the following armed group attacks and conflict in North and South Kivu in 2020:

[...] In the DR Congo (DRC), three conflicts were fought on war-level. The government's campaign against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) escalated to a war [→ DR Congo (ADF)]. This year, the conflict's dynamics centred in DRC, with no violent measure recorded in Uganda. Mostly based in North Kivu province, ADF was allegedly involved in 289 violent incidents, resulting in at least 1,483 fatalities. Several large-scale military operations throughout the year managed to occupy ADF's main bases. Nevertheless, the group mostly maintained its support and recruitment network. [...] A third, highly violent conflict continued in the provinces of North and South Kivu, Maniema, as well as Tanganyika. Competing militant groups such as the MayiMayi factions, the Nduma Defense of Congo-Renovated, and other militias rooted in local communities continued to fight over territory and resources, also frequently clashing with the Congolese military [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)].

[...] The most active groups in North Kivu were the Nduma Defense of Congo-Renovated (NDC-R), Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo (APCLS), and the Collective Movement for Change (CMC) comprising Nyatura groups, whereas in South Kivu Raia Mutomboki (RM) factions and armed groups affiliated with the Banyamulenge community, on the one hand, and Bafuliiro, Babembe, and Banyindi communities, on the other, dominated the conflict dynamics. NDC-R remained active and operated in North Kivu territories Rutshuru, Masisi, and

¹⁹⁴ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2020](#) [Events in 2019], 2020

¹⁹⁵ The Guardian, ['We were so close': how unrest in Congo thwarted the battle against Ebola](#), 23 December 2019

¹⁹⁶ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 1. G, Abuses in internal conflict*

Walikale, extending both the territory under its control and its troop strength by co-opting fighters from other armed groups. NDC-R leader Shimirayi Mwisha Guidon further coordinated the Réseau des patriotes résistants congolais (RPRC), a coalition of armed groups including Mayi-Mayi Kifuafua, Mayi-Mayi Simba, Mayi-Mayi GuidesMouvement acquis au changement, Mayi-Mayi Mazembe Union pour la protection des innocents (UPDI), and Raia Mutomboki (RM) groups. In addition, APCLS-R had joined forces with NDC-R in late 2018 after the faction led by Mapenzi Bulere Likuwe had split from APCLS. The operational area controlled by NDC-R and their allies extended to cover Masisi, Walikale, Lubero, and Rutshuru territories in early 2020. Moreover, FARDC supported NDC-R activities targeting the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and provided logistical support [→ DR Congo, Rwanda (FDLR, CNRD)]. NDC-R activities targeted Nyatura groups, mainly Nyatura APRCD, Nyatura Domi. Other groups organized within the CMC as well as the Mayi-Mayi Forces populaires de paix (FPP) in Masisi territory. In Rutshuru territory, NDC-R targeted the APCLS and FDLR. Furthermore, NDC-R targeted civilians in all regions they controlled. Discontent among NDC-R commanders and allies increased with Guidon's rule over the equitable sharing of internal resources, the loss of control over several mining sites and the inability to counter FDLR's influence. Subsequently, NDC-R commanders Gilbert Bwira and Mapenzi Likuhe dismissed Guidon, resulting in the split of the group. On June 8, NDC-R fighters led by Bwira and supported by FARDC attacked Guidon at the NDC-R headquarters in Pinga locality, Walikale. Alerted by a FARDC officer, Guidon escaped and regrouped with remaining followers in Walikale. Heavy infighting between the Bwira wing and the Guidon wing of NDC-R marked NDC-R's activity in the second half of the year, especially in Walikale. For instance, 17 people were killed and seven injured in a clash between Bwira-led and Guidon-led fighters on July 14 in the villages of Byamba and Bukucha. On July 20, NDC-R Bwira, supported by FARDC, clashed with NDC-R Guidon in Pinga, killing 37 people and leaving twelve injured. On September 4, NDC-R Bwira fighters shot and killed a civilian, whom they suspected of collaborating with NDC-R Guidon, in Mutongo village. The Bwira wing was often supported by FARDC. For instance, on October 14, FARDC and NDC-R Bwira attacked NDC-R Guidon in the villages of Nkingwa, Twamakuru, Koko, and Mpama, killing eleven people. [...] FDLR was mainly active in Rutshuru territory, North Kivu province, DRC [...]. Overall, FDLR [...] activity significantly decreased, mainly due to the ongoing military operation Sokola 2 by the Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC) and pressure from other armed groups [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)]. [...]

On April 24, FARDC launched military operations against FDLR. At least seven civilians were killed and up to 250 houses burned. Following an operation targeting inter alia FDLR-Forces Combattants Abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) elements, FARDC announced that one of their self-proclaimed generals was killed on August 28 in Makoka locality, Rutshuru. Although weakened by FARDC operations, FDLR and CNRD attacks continued throughout the year. In the first half of the year, attacks attributed to FDLR increased in Nyiragongo and Rutshuru territories, with at least 21 civilians killed. On April 24, suspected FDLR-FOCA members ambushed and killed 13 rangers and four civilians in Virunga National Park. In the latter half of the year, following the redeployment of some FARDC units, FDLR and CNRD began to recruit actively in the northern part of South Kivu, especially among young people in Kalehe. [...]

On April 24, suspected FDLR-FOCA members ambushed and killed 13 rangers and four civilians in Virunga National Park. In the latter half of the year, following the redeployment of some FARDC units, FDLR and CNRD began to recruit actively in the northern part of South Kivu, especially among young people in Kalehe. [...] ¹⁹⁷

Reporting on attacks in 2019 and 2020 in the Beni locality, the Kivu Security Tracker noted:

[...] When counted exclusively in recorded cases of violent death, Beni territory remains the most violent area of the eastern Congo. Since the beginning of the “Beni massacres” in 2014, the region has had little respite except for a lull between late 2016 and mid-2017. Most

¹⁹⁷ Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, [Conflict Barometer 2020](#), 2021 [Analyzed Period: 01/01/20 – 12/31/20]

recently, after a series of deadly attacks in late 2019, a resurgence of massacres and killings occurred throughout 2020. While media and local authorities attribute a majority of these events to the formerly Ugandan ADF rebellion, investigations into and prosecution of specific cases are rare. In the absence of seriously triangulated evidence, UN and academic specialists continue to caution that other armed groups also contribute to the violence, that the ADF has internal divisions, and that connections to the Islamic State should not be exaggerated. [...] proliferation of armed actors has made it difficult to properly attribute responsibility for attacks, while entrenching violence. There were half a dozen armed groups, including the ADF, in our 2015 mapping, but by 2017 there were over 15 in the same area, and we counted a similar number in 2020.¹⁹⁸

Human Rights Watch reported on kidnapping, torture, rape and murder of civilians near the Virunga National Park in North Kivu, where also a number of hostages were taken by gangs to extort money from families:

Criminal gangs have kidnapped for ransom at least 170 people near the Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo between April 2017 and March 2020. Small groups armed with guns and machetes have beaten, tortured, and murdered hostages, raping women and girls, who make up more than half of them, while using threats to extort money from their families. Congolese law enforcement should take steps to dismantle the criminal gangs and arrest those responsible for the kidnappings and sexual violence in the Bukoma area of Rutshuru territory in North Kivu province. The United Nations peacekeeping mission in Congo, MONUSCO, which has a field base within a 10-kilometer radius of the agricultural fields and areas where most kidnappings have occurred, should protect civilians by actively patrolling in high-risk areas, consistent with its mandate. "Criminal gangs have demanded crippling ransoms from families and brutally raped scores of women and girls in Virunga National Park over the past three years," said Thomas Fessy, senior Congo researcher at Human Rights Watch. [...]

The Kivu Security Tracker, a joint project of Human Rights Watch and the Congo Research Group, reported that armed assailants kidnapped at least 775 people since 2017 in Rutshuru territory alone, and 1,190 throughout North Kivu province. Thus far in 2020, the Kivu Security Tracker reported that at least 200 people have been abducted for ransom in the province. In most reported cases, gangs of three to five men armed with guns and machetes abducted people in their fields or on the road. The kidnappers often initially pretended to be harmless, claiming to be soldiers or approaching their victims to ask for water. The kidnappers would release some people, such as young children and older people, who were given the kidnappers' phone numbers, so that their families could contact and negotiate ransoms for those being held. The gangs have detained hostages in Virunga National Park.¹⁹⁹

ACLED reported on the following attack carried out against the AFD in North Kivu in January 2020:

[...] The FARDC announced a campaign against the ADF on October 30 (VOA, 12 January 2020). Last week, at least 40 ADF militants were reportedly killed in a military operation at Madina in North Kivu, which, in addition to being an ADF headquarters, the FARDC claim is one of the ADF's last strongholds. [...] ²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Kivu Security Tracker, [The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo: Missed Opportunities, Protracted Insecurity and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies](#), 28 February 2021

¹⁹⁹ Human Rights Watch, [DR Congo: Gangs Kidnap, Rape in National Park](#), 30 July 2020

²⁰⁰ Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview: Africa 5-11 January 2020](#), 16 January 2020

In January 2020 The Guardian reported that the ADF carried out a series of raids on four villages to the west of Beni territory in North Kivu, attacking amongst others an Anglican pastor in the village of Eringeti:

A militia group has launched a series of bloody attacks in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, plunging the country further into instability after months of violence and political tension. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an extremist group, carried out a series of raids on four villages to the west of Beni territory on Tuesday, where the army has begun a large-scale offensive against the rebels. Government authority in eastern DRC is weak and significant territory is controlled by more than 100 armed groups. [...]

Among the victims in the recent attacks was an Anglican pastor in the village of Eringeti, said Omar Kavota, from a local rights group, Cepadho. [...]

The Congolese army began an offensive against the ADF on 30 October and has made some progress, dismantling many of the militia's bases and detaining a number of senior leaders. The violence eased in January but since November at least 265 people have been killed, according to the Kivu Security Tracker, a research initiative that maps unrest in the region [...]²⁰¹

Reporting on developments in the DRC between 26 November 2019 and 16 March 2020, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) remained a serious threat in Beni territory, North Kivu Province, and, increasingly, in neighbouring Ituri Province. Following several days of heavy clashes, on 9 January [2020], FARDC succeeded in capturing the so-called Madina camp of ADF, located in the triangle area between Beni, Erengeti and Semuliki. ADF subsequently scattered into smaller units, but retained its ability to inflict deadly attacks, killing at least 300 civilians, including 92 women and 12 children, as well as more than 40 FARDC soldiers during the reporting period. Unlike previous attacks, which were concentrated along the Beni-Erengeti road axis, many incidents since the operation against Madina camp occurred in the border area between North Kivu and Ituri Provinces. The presence of State security forces and MONUSCO in those remote areas was initially limited, but has been reinforced through additional patrolling while two temporary bases are being established.²⁰²

The same report noted with regards to Masisi and Rutshuru territories:

In Masisi and Rutshuru territories, violent clashes among various armed groups persisted against the backdrop of limited FARDC operations against some of them. The activities of the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové remained a concern over the past three months as the group further expanded its area of control through a series of alliances. Frequent clashes occurred between the Nduma défense du Congo -Rénové, the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and Nyatura groups. At least 43 civilians were killed in those clashes. The Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda also killed 16 civilians in reprisal attacks. FARDC initiated a series of negotiations with armed groups, leading to the surrender of more than 500 combatants. No details were communicated on the modalities of the demobilization process.²⁰³

²⁰¹ The Guardian, [*Militia raids kill dozens as DRC plunges deeper into instability*](#), 31 January 2020

²⁰² UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 18 March 2020, para. 15

²⁰³ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 18 March 2020, para. 17

MONUSCO reported in February 2020 that residents of Lac Vert, a neighborhood on the outskirts of Goma, told members of MONUSCO's Female Engagement Team about "a rise in cases of kidnappings, which they said effectively restricts the movement of people".²⁰⁴

Also reporting on an event in February 2020, ACLED stated: "[...] In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), large numbers of civilian fatalities were reported during two days of Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) attacks in the Beni region of North Kivu".²⁰⁵

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its subsequent report covering November 2019 to 25 April 2020:

Almost immediately after the launch of FARDC operations against ADF on 30 October 2019, civilians in Beni territory were targeted in a wave of brutal attacks [...] The attacks expanded to north-western Beni territory, and southern Irumu and Mambasa territories in Ituri [...] Hundreds of civilians were killed during those attacks – some of which were simultaneous – while thousands were displaced as a result. In November and December 2019 alone, over 260 civilians, mainly women and children, were killed, according to MONUSCO. The acute violence triggered, in turn, violent popular reactions, including the lynching of alleged ADF collaborators and attacks against MONUSCO [...].²⁰⁶

The Guardian reported that in April 2020, an estimated number of 60 fighters from suspected Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, a Hutu rebel group, ambushed a convoy of civilians, killing 16 people, including 12 rangers, in Virunga national park in North Kivu:

Suspected Hutu militiamen have killed 16 people, including 12 rangers, in the Virunga national park, a Democratic Republic of the Congo government official has said, in the deadliest attack in the park's recent history. The park in eastern DRC, home to critically endangered mountain gorillas as well as hundreds of other rare species, has faced repeated incursions and attacks by local armed groups. About 60 fighters from the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, a Hutu rebel group, ambushed a convoy of civilians that was being protected by 15 rangers, said Cosma Wilungula, the director of the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation. Many others were seriously injured, he said. There was no immediate confirmation from the Virunga park of the incident or casualties. The park has been repeatedly hit by violence. It was shut to tourists for eight months in 2018 after a series of attacks on staff but reopened after a thorough review of security precautions and reinforcement of the 700 rangers deployed to keep animals and visitors safe. The park, in North Kivu province, has a reputation as one of the most dangerous conservation projects in the world. It faces multiple security threats including illegal charcoal production, smuggling and poaching, as well as from the Mai Mai militia.²⁰⁷

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 17 March and 16 June 2020:

The level of violence in Beni territory and adjacent areas in Ituri Province remained of grave concern. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) continued to pose a significant security threat, having moved to the west of Beni territory and into southern Ituri, where the presence of State security forces is limited. During the reporting period, suspected ADF combatants carried out

²⁰⁴ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), [Goma: Lac Vert's residents request MONUSCO to increase security patrols in the area](#), 11 February 2020

²⁰⁵ Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview: Africa 26 January – 1 February 2020](#), 6 February 2020

²⁰⁶ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 2 June 2020, paras. 137 and 138

²⁰⁷ The Guardian, [Twelve rangers among 16 killed in ambush at DRC gorilla park](#), 24 April 2020

nearly 30 attacks, in which at least 89 civilians were killed, including 18 women, 1 girl and 14 persons whose age and gender could not be confirmed. New patterns of attacks, including looting, abductions and ambushes on patrols of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) indicated that ADF were regrouping, potentially with the intention of regaining control of positions lost to FARDC. ADF attacks resulted in at least 45 FARDC casualties, with MONUSCO evacuating 37 wounded soldiers. The continued attacks prompted renewed calls for self-defence initiatives, revitalizing support for local Mai-Mai groups fighting ADF in north-western Beni territory.²⁰⁸

With regards to the Nyiragongo and Rutshuru territories, the same report stated:

Attacks attributed to the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) increased in Nyiragongo and Rutshuru territories, with at least 21 civilians killed. In response, on 13 April [2020], FARDC launched operations against the group, resulting in a number of civilian casualties and displacement, as well as retaliatory attacks by the group, with MONUSCO documenting at least seven casualties and the destruction of over 100 houses. On 24 April [2020], suspected elements of the FDLR-Forces combattantes abacunguzi ambushed and killed 13 rangers of the Institut congolais pour la conservation de la nature and four civilians in the Virunga National Park.²⁰⁹

The same report further documented:

The conflict between the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) and the Nyatura coalition with FDLR and the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) continued to create insecurity in Masisi and Rutshuru territories and resulted in the further expansion of the area controlled by NDC-R. There were nearly 200 separate incidents of clashes and exactions by these groups, during which over 160 civilians were killed. Among the armed groups active in the area, NDC-R fighters committed the greatest number of human rights violations, including conflict related sexual violence. In response, the Military Prosecutor of North Kivu issued an arrest warrant for the NDC-R leader, Guidon Shimiray Mwiswa, which has not been executed to date.²¹⁰

Specifically mentioning an attack in April 2020, ACLED reported:

[...] In the DRC's North Kivu, an attack by a militia in the Virunga National Park in Rutshuru territory resulted in the deaths of more than a dozen park rangers and civilians. The attack came amid ongoing clashes between Congolese military forces (FARDC) and Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) in Rutshuru province. [...]²¹¹

The same source reported that in May 2020:

[...] Nduma Defence of Congo-Renewal (NDC-R) militiamen clashed with the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo (APCLS) and Nyatura in North Kivu's Masisi and Walikale territories. One such clash in

²⁰⁸ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 June 2020, para. 10

²⁰⁹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 June 2020, para. 11

²¹⁰ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 June 2020, para. 12

²¹¹ Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview: Africa 19-25 April 2020](#), 29 April 2020

Walikale's Mashango village, near the border with Rutshuru, resulted in dozens of fatalities. [...]²¹²

In June 2020, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo reported on the security and health situation in North Kivu:

In North Kivu, operations by the army against the Allied Democratic Forces armed group, had been followed by reprisal attacks on civilians by the armed group. Between November 2019 and May 2020, at least 502 civilians had been killed, including 14 children. Other armed groups continued to operate, particularly in areas where State security forces were not present.²¹³

In the same month the UN reported its concerns over violence in North Kivu:

In North Kivu, the launch of military operations by the government forces in November 2019 led to retaliatory attacks against civilians by the main armed group, the ADF, which by 31 May had killed at least 514 civilians using machetes, axes and heavy weapons, and have been abducting children and attacking schools and hospitals. (ADF fighters were also responsible for 77 of the civilian deaths in neighbouring Ituri). State defence forces have also been heavily implicated, with the FARDC reported to have killed 59 civilians and the PNC to have killed 24. More than 400,000 people have been displaced in North Kivu. The FARDC operations have also resulted in the ADF moving into territories previously unaffected by armed conflict. As in Ituri, there is a serious risk that Mayi-Mayi self-defence groups will spring up, with civilians once again caught in the middle.²¹⁴

In July 2020 a mission was carried out by MONUSCO in the southern part of Lubero territory to assess the security and humanitarian situations:

For several months, armed groups' coalitions have been fighting for the control of several villages of the Itala (Lubero) and Ikobo (Walikale) groupings. Those armed groups have been killing, kidnapping, looting and perpetrating other human rights violations. There has been a massive displacement of the population towards large agglomerations such as Kirumba and Kanyabayonga. According to the mayor of the Kanyabayonga commune, to date, more than 3,600 displaced households, or nearly 20,000 people, have gathered in Kanyabayonga commune. Most of them live with host families.

The situation of the displaced persons in the region is all the more serious as in Miriki, for example, when the delegation visited this territory on Wednesday, July 22 [2020], the village was burying its dead: 4 displaced people killed, said the local residents, due to malnutrition and lack of adequate care.²¹⁵

Describing the security situation in North Kivu between 17 June and 18 September 2020, the UN Secretary-General noted in his report that "The security situation deteriorated further across North Kivu as clashes between armed groups over territory and natural resources continued to pose a major threat to civilians. MONUSCO documented at least 107 incidents

²¹² Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview: Africa 31 May – 6 June 2020](#), 10 June 2020

²¹³ OHCHR, [Human Rights Council holds enhanced interactive dialogue on the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Begins Interactive Dialogue on the Human Rights Situation in Mali](#), 17 June 2020

²¹⁴ OHCHR, [1,300 civilians killed in the DRC in past eight months – Bachelet](#), 5 June 2020

²¹⁵ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), [Nord-Kivu: La MONUSCO évalue la situation sécuritaire dans le sud-lubero en vue d'une réponse adaptée](#), 28 July 2020 [Note that only the title of the article is in French; the actual content in English]

attributable to armed groups, in which 67 civilians were killed (34 men, 23 women and 10 children) and 73 were injured (40 men, 20 women and 13 children) across the province”.²¹⁶

The same report further highlighted:

In Walikale territory and surrounding areas, an internal split in the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) on 8 July led to the attempted overthrow of its leader, Guidon Shimiray Mwissa, by his deputy, Gilbert Bwria. A series of clashes between the two NDC-R factions subsequently occurred around Pinga. On 18 August, approximately 485 NDC-R Bwira elements surrendered to the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), handing in approximately 90 weapons. While the split weakened the NDC-R, the security situation did not improve, as rival armed groups moved to occupy positions vacated by the NDC-R in Rutshuru and Masisi territories and southern Lubero.²¹⁷

With regards to Beni territory, the UN report stated:

In Beni territory, attacks against civilians, FARDC positions and MONUSCO by suspected Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) elements continued. A MONUSCO convoy was attacked on 22 June [2020] along the Beni-Kasindi road, resulting in one peacekeeper being killed and one injured. ADF combatants carried out at least 25 attacks against civilians in the northern, north-western and south-eastern areas of Beni territory, as well as in the Irumu and Mambasa territories of Ituri Province, resulting in the deaths of 73 civilians, including 11 women and three children. The ADF also increased pressure on the FARDC, with at least 21 clashes resulting in some 50 FARDC soldiers being killed and dozens wounded. There was an increase in ADF activities near their traditional stronghold areas in the Mayangose jungle, east of Beni, and the “triangle” to the north of Beni from where they had been dislodged by the FARDC. This is possibly linked to a reduced FARDC presence in those areas in the context of growing logistical challenges to maintain forward operating bases in remote areas.²¹⁸

According to the UN Secretary-General’s report covering major events and developments between 19 September and 1 December 2020:

In Petit Nord, North Kivu, the security situation deteriorated in the surroundings of Pinga, where in-fighting between rival factions of the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) escalated in September and October. Those clashes resulted in the death of 17 civilians, including 1 woman, the rape of 3 women and the displacement of 5,149 families. The situation was further exacerbated by the increased activity of Nyatura militias and of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), which attempted to seize control of areas vacated by NDC-R as a result of the split within the group. Overall, MONUSCO recorded at least 113 incidents, resulting in the death of 85 civilians, including at least 10 women and 6 children, representing a 12 per cent increase in the number of civilians killed compared with the previous reporting period [...]

In Grand Nord, in Beni territory, attacks by suspected Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) persisted against civilians and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC). Suspected ADF elements, allegedly working in cooperation with local Mai-Mai groups, carried out 30 attacks against civilians, resulting in at least 174 civilians killed (127 men, 42 women and 5 boys), 11 injured (10 men and 1 woman) and 59 abducted (47 men, 9 women and 3 boys), as well as 40 houses destroyed. This represents 35 per cent of all incidents and 85 per

²¹⁶ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 September 2020, para. 11

²¹⁷ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 September 2020, para. 12

²¹⁸ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 September 2020, para. 13

cent of all killings of civilians occurring in Grand Nord. Although there has been a 27 per cent decrease in incidents against civilians compared with the previous reporting period, the death rate resulting from those attacks increased by 34 per cent. On 18 November, a team of military investigators led by the prosecutor at the Operational Military Court was deployed to Mwalika, with support from MONUSCO, and confirmed that 30 civilians had been killed, presumably after being abducted by ADF combatants in Lisasa, Kisimba and Kasanza on 31 October [2020]. [...]

Attacks by ADF and its clashes with FARDC are reaching a level of intensity not seen since July 2020, indicating a deterioration in the security situation. Following an attack against FARDC by suspected ADF elements on 5 October [2020], the MONUSCO Intervention Brigade responded and repelled the assailants. On 20 October [2020], in a separate attack by suspected ADF elements on the Beni prison, 1,335 prisoners escaped. In response, MONUSCO deployed a quick reaction force and launched an unmanned aerial system to fly over the area and assist local authorities in locating escaped prisoners on the run. As at 12 November [2020], 404 prisoners had been located and returned to the prison [...]

In line with the trend noticed in the previous reporting period, a continued increase in movements of suspected ADF elements was observed in southern Irumu territory along the border with North Kivu, as well as the Mbau-Kamango and BeniKasindi axes that lead to Uganda. Furthermore, insecurity in the south-east of Beni town increased, reportedly in connection with the harvest season for cocoa and other agricultural produce, with ADF and Mai-Mai groups competing for control of that lucrative seasonal activity.²¹⁹

Specifically referring to attacks in November 2020, ACLED reported attacks on civilians by the ADF in North Kivu: “[...] Military forces also continued operations in the area, driving CODECO from areas surrounding the former CODECO stronghold of Bedu-Ezekere. In North Kivu, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) continued its recent campaign of attacks on civilian targets”.²²⁰

Human Rights Watch concluded that Beni territory in 2020: “[...] remained an epicenter of violence, with at least 520 civilians killed in more than 140 attacks by various groups, including the ADF.”²²¹

2021

Reporting on developments in North Kivu between 2 December 2020 and 18 March 2021, the UN Secretary-General report stated that

In Grand Nord, the security situation has continued to deteriorate, amid attacks on civilians and FARDC positions. Since December [2020], ADF has conducted 44 attacks in Beni territory, resulting in the killing of 178 civilians, including 48 women and 2 boys. In December [2020], ADF concentrated its targeted attacks on the Rwenzori sector, bordering Uganda, while remaining scattered across four areas in Beni territory. On 28 December [2020], ADF occupied Loselose, killing 7 civilian men and 12 FARDC soldiers, torching houses and abducting civilians. FARDC recaptured Loselose on 1 January [2021], with MONUSCO support. ADF also attacked Lulo, on 3 January [2021], and Kyvikere, on 4 January [2021], allegedly killing 16 and 23 civilians, respectively, including 9 women.²²²

The same report further highlighted:

²¹⁹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 November 2020, paras. 10-13

²²⁰ Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project, [Regional Overview: Africa 1-7 November 2020](#), 11 November 2020

²²¹ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2021](#) [Events of 2020], 2021

²²² UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 17

The deterioration of the security situation and inflammatory statements made by some local opinion leaders further eroded confidence in the Congolese security and defence forces. Consequently, an increase in the use of “mob justice” against suspected ADF members has been observed since December, which has led to the death of nine FARDC soldiers in seven separate incidents. On 26 December [2020], the local population of Bulongo killed two FARDC soldiers and one of their spouses after confusing them with ADF elements. On 8 January [2021], in Lume, the local population attacked the convoy of a FARDC battalion commander and set his vehicle ablaze. On 16 January [2021], residents of Lume also killed a FARDC officer and a former member of the Mai-Mai group, Union des patriotes pour la libération du Congo, on a demobilization campaign in the area.²²³

In January 2021 ACLED reported:

[...] In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and a series of clashes with DRC military forces (FARDC) have resulted in large numbers of dead in the North Kivu territory of Beni. Fifty bodies were found after fighting concluded in the town of Loselose near Mwenda, where the FARDC had launched an offensive in response to the ADF's occupation of the village. An earlier attack by the ADF on Tingwe village, near Eringeti, also left dozens of civilians dead. Meanwhile, two days of clashes between ADF fighters and the FARDC at Kifrere village, in the Ruwenzori area, resulted in heavy casualties.²²⁴

With regards to the situation in Petit Nord in early 2021, the UN report stated:

In Petit Nord, the security situation deteriorated in most territories, in particular in Masisi and Rutshuru, following a spike in armed group activity. In early January [2021], sporadic clashes between the Mai-Mai forces patriotiques populaires-armée du peuple (FPP-AP) and the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) Guidon faction resulted in the displacement of approximately 3,000 people to Lubero territory.

Clashes between the NDC-R Bwira faction and a coalition of armed groups, including Nyatura, Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) and Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, increased as the NDC-R Bwira faction attempted to reclaim territory previously lost in Masisi territory. At least nine civilians (five men, three women and a boy) were killed and three others injured. Reportedly, on 2 February [2021], the NDC-R Bwira faction also launched attacks against the Coalition des mouvements pour le changement/Nyatura in Matenge.

On 10 January [2021], alleged Mai-Mai Jackson elements ambushed and killed six rangers of the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation in Nyamitwiwi. FARDC increased its operations against armed groups in Rutshuru and Masisi territories, resulting in the killing of at least 14 civilians, including 2 children, and some displacement of the population. On 1 February [2021], a FARDC soldier was reportedly killed and 250 households were displaced from Showa village to Masisi centre during a FARDC operation against APCLS. On 23 January [2021], FARDC soldiers clashed with Mai-Mai FPP-AP at the barrier in Buleusa, northern Walikale territory, resulting in the death of two civilian boys, three FARDC soldiers and two armed group members.²²⁵

The report also noted that around Pinga, “The security situation improved”, where the “two NDC-R factions had previously clashed following the movement of the NDC-R Guidon faction towards the north of Walikale territory. Overall, there was a 67 per cent decrease in security

²²³ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 18

²²⁴ Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview: Africa 13 December 2020-8 January 2021](#), 13 January 2021

²²⁵ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 19

incidents in the territory, despite 19 reported attacks against civilians that resulted in the killing of 10 civilians (5 men, 3 women and 2 boys). In late January [2021], however, FARDC launched an operation against the NDC-R Guidon faction near Irumbu, which resulted in the killing of at least 25 elements of the NDC-R Guidon faction. The faction, along with Mai-Mai Simba Mando, counter-attacked FARDC positions near Mundjuli and Irameso in Walikale territory".²²⁶

In February 2021 The Guardian newspaper reported that the Italian ambassador to the DRC and two others were killed in an attempted kidnapping of a UN convoy north of Goma in eastern DRC:

Italy's ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and two other people have been killed in an attack on a United Nations convoy in the restive east of the central African country. The convoy from the World Food Programme (WFP) was attacked at about 10.30am local time (0830 GMT) during an attempted kidnapping near the town of Kanyamahoro, about 10 miles north of the regional capital, Goma, a spokesperson for Virunga national park said. Ambassador Luca Attanasio and a male Italian military police officer travelling with him were killed, the Italian foreign ministry said in a statement. A driver also died in the attack, diplomatic sources and local officials said. It was not immediately clear who was behind the attack, but the road on which the convoy was travelling is a frequent site of attacks by bandits and armed militia.²²⁷

Al Jazeera reported also in February 2021 on ADF attacks in North Kivu:

Bozi Sindiwako, the chief official for the Rwenzori area in North Kivu province, said on Wednesday the attack by ADF fighters on the village of Kisima the previous night had killed 11 people, according to AFP news agency. [...]

In a separate attack overnight, two people – a civilian and a soldier – were killed in the North Kivu city of Oicha, according to Mayor Nicolas Kikuku. He added that an ADF fighter was also killed. The new deaths bring the number of civilians killed by armed groups in Beni since November 2019 to more than 1,010, the KST said.²²⁸

With regards to security impacting on the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the safety of humanitarian workers, the UN Secretary-General report of March 2021 reported that:

In January 2021, 37 security incidents directly affected humanitarian workers and assets across the country. On 22 February [2021], during a humanitarian field mission, a World Food Programme (WFP) convoy was ambushed by armed elements on the road between Goma and Rutshuru, North Kivu, resulting in the death of the Ambassador of Italy to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, his close protection officer and one national WFP staff member.²²⁹

Reporting on the visit of a delegation of representatives of permanent missions to the UN to Goma and specifically the territory of Rutshuru in February 2021, local security actors comprised of the "Territorial Administrator, FARDC (Armed Forces of the DRC), PNC (Congolesse National Police), ANR (National Intelligence Agency) and DGM (General

²²⁶ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 20

²²⁷ The Guardian, [Italian ambassador to DR Congo dies in attack on UN convoy](#), 22 February 2021

²²⁸ Al Jazeera, [DRC: More than a dozen killed in suspected ADF attacks](#), 24 February 2021

²²⁹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 33

Directorate of Migration)” raised “the issue of the criminal kidnappings for ransom that is now rampant in the region”.²³⁰

In mid-March 2021 “at least 15 civilians” have been killed, some of whom were beheaded, by the ADF in the village of Bulongo.²³¹

In March 2021, Al Jazeera reported that UNHCR documented nearly 200 people killed, dozens injured, and an estimated 40,000 people displaced in Beni Territory in North Kivu province as well as nearby villages in Ituri province:

More than 200 people have been killed and an estimated 40,000 displaced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since January in attacks attributed to armed groups affiliated to ISIL (ISIS), the United Nations has said. The UN refugee agency reported on Friday an “alarming increase” in attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) [...]

Since the start of the year, attacks blamed on the ADF “have killed nearly 200 people, injured dozens of others, and displaced an estimated 40,000 people in DRC’s Beni Territory in North Kivu province as well as nearby villages in Ituri province,” UNHCR spokesman Babar Baloch said. “In less than three months, the ADF has allegedly raided 25 villages, set fire to dozens of houses and kidnapped over 70 people,” he told reporters in Geneva. The ADF has a reputation of being the bloodiest of the 122 militias that plague the eastern DRC. It killed an estimated 465 people last year. [...]

The massacres have become more frequent since the army launched an offensive in October 2019, forcing the ADF to break up into smaller, highly mobile units, say experts. Baloch said the latest surge in attacks appeared to be due to reprisals by armed groups, their search for food and medicine, and accusations against communities of sharing information on ADF positions.²³²

At the end of April 2021 “Militants killed at least 19 people, including 10 soldiers, in raids on two villages” in Beni.²³³ According to the same source “Later that day, one of Beni’s most influential imams was shot dead by unknown assailants inside Beni’s central mosque while delivering the evening prayer, according to local media reports. He had been known for preaching against Islamic militancy over a regional radio station”.²³⁴

At the end of May 2021 the UN reported that “At least 55 people were killed, and many others wounded, in the overnight assaults [...] which targeted camps hosting internally displaced people near the towns of [...] Tchabi, North Kivu province. They were carried out by suspected members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) armed group”.²³⁵

According to the UN Secretary-General’s report covering major events and developments between 19 March and 18 June 2021, the security situation in North Kivu was as follows:

The overall security situation in North Kivu deteriorated amid increased armed group activity, fuelling demonstrations by citizens’ movements and pressure groups against the local authorities, humanitarian actors and the United Nations for the perceived inadequacy of their response. These developments hindered protection activities and heightened intercommunal tensions. [...]

²³⁰ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), [DRC: A delegation of representatives of permanent missions to the UN visits North Kivu](#), 15 February 2021

²³¹ Africa News, [DR Congo: At least 15 killed in attack on villagers](#), 15 March 2021

²³² Al Jazeera, [Over 200 killed in armed attacks in DR Congo since January: UN](#), 19 March 2021

²³³ Reuters, [DR Congo declares state of siege over eastern bloodshed](#), 1 May 2021

²³⁴ Reuters, [DR Congo declares state of siege over eastern bloodshed](#), 1 May 2021

²³⁵ UN News, [UN chief condemns deadly attacks targeting displaced people in DR Congo](#), 2 June 2021

In the Grand Nord area, despite ongoing FARDC operations, ADF continued to carry out attacks in Beni territory, especially in the northern part and Rwenzori sector. From 19 March to 27 May [2021], 45 security incidents were reported, in which at least 157 civilians, including 40 women, were killed by ADF and at least 21 others were injured, including 4 women. During the resulting protests, which spanned a three-week period in April [2021], pressure groups and citizens' movements denounced the perceived inadequacy of the Government and FARDC response to insecurity and demanded the departure of the United Nations and international humanitarian actors from Beni and Butembo. Demonstrators attacked two MONUSCO bases in Beni and in Lubero and burned two humanitarian facilities in Oicha. The Congolese National Police and FARDC were deployed to disperse violent protesters and contribute to the protection of United Nations personnel and premises. [...]

The Special Representative engaged with the Congolese authorities at all levels, while maintaining dialogue with civil society groups, including demonstrators and organizers, and local journalists, to defuse tensions and reaffirm the commitment of MONUSCO to protecting civilians. The Mission also held meetings with traditional authorities, women leaders and youth leaders to discuss joint efforts to ensure security and protect civilians. In addition, MONUSCO and humanitarian actors intensified communication activities to counter misinformation, hate speech and incitement to violence. By the end of April [2021], economic activity and humanitarian operations had resumed as popular support for the demonstrations subsided. However, the social and economic paralysis triggered by the unrest heightened intercommunal tensions in North Kivu, especially between the Kumu and Nande communities. On 13 April [2021], in Buhene, Nyiragongo territory, during an intervention aimed at dispersing an intercommunal clash, FARDC soldiers caused the death of five men from the Nande community and three others from the Kumu community. With the involvement of the Congolese authorities, intercommunal tensions receded but the perception of an inadequate security response persists [...]

Mai-Mai factions attacked FARDC and Congolese National Police positions in southern Lubero territory and imposed illegal taxes on civilians. From 19 March to 27 May [2021], 26 incidents involving Mai-Mai combatants were reported, in which at least 4 civilians were killed and 15 others, including 1 woman, were wounded [...]

In the Petit Nord area, the security situation remained unstable. From 19 March to 16 June [2021], 133 incidents were reported, in which 65 civilians, including 11 women and 5 children, were killed and 61 others, including 7 women and 12 children, were injured. FARDC operations in Masisi territory against the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain and Nyatura groups resulted in retaliatory action against civilians by armed groups. Through its good offices, MONUSCO engaged with the Congolese authorities with a view to minimizing the impact of military operations on civilians and bringing to justice those suspected of committing human rights violations [...]

In Rutshuru territory, FARDC suspended operations against the Collectif des mouvements pour le changement (CMC)/Forces de défense du peuple (FDP) and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) in late March, after retaking several villages in the Bukombo area. The FDLR and Nyatura groups returned to their positions once those had been vacated by FARDC, thereby maintaining control over large parts of the territory, including inside Virunga National Park [...]

In Walikale territory, between 22 and 24 May, clashes over control of mining sites reportedly occurred between the Guidon faction of Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) and the coalition of the Bwira faction of NDC-R and the Mai-Mai forces patriotiques populaires-armée du peuple, resulting in the abduction of at least 18 civilians. The Guidon faction of NDC-R steadily increased its control over large swathes of Walikale, enabling the group to recruit and reorganize.²³⁶

UNHCR noted in July 2021 that "Armed groups continue to devastate civilian lives despite DRC's President Felix Tshisekedi launching a state of emergency on 6 May [2021] in North Kivu

²³⁶ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 June 2021, paras. 15-21

and its neighbouring Ituri province. The declaration was meant to halt violence perpetrated by armed groups and establish law and order in the region. Since 22 June [2021], the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) are alleged to have brutally killed at least 14 people and injured many others in and around the city of Beni. Several properties were looted, and others burned to the ground. This was the first attack in two years by the ADF on the city, and the group's resurgence is terrorizing the lives of inhabitants. There is a sense of panic and anxiety among the community, as well as a lack of confidence in security forces given the high expectations of improved security conditions following the new measures. These recent attacks have forced thousands of people to flee their homes to seek safety in the eastern part of Beni, and are continuing to weaken and disrupt social, economic and educational activities".²³⁷

Specifically on 29th June 2021 Reuters reported that "Democratic Republic of Congo's army said [...] an Islamist militia which claims links to Islamic State (IS) was responsible for two blasts in the eastern city of Beni, as the mayor closed schools, churches and markets for 48 hours. The army said Sunday's attacks bore the signature of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which has used improvised explosive devices in the past".²³⁸ The same article further cautioned: "The army's statement coincided with the publication of a claim by Islamic State that it had carried out the attacks. It said they killed two people. It was not possible to independently verify the assertion, made through a verified IS-related Telegram channel. Islamic State has claimed dozens of killings blamed on the ADF in the last three years, although U.N. experts say they have not found conclusive evidence IS has control over ADF operations. U.N. and independent experts have also cautioned that some attacks blamed on the ADF have, in fact, been carried out by other militias or by factions of the Congolese army".²³⁹

6.1.1. Violence directed against the Hutu population

See also information included in section [6.3.1. Violence directed against the Hutu population](#), in Ituri.

The U.S. Department of State's annual report on human rights covering 2020 reported that "Long-standing ethnic tensions also fueled some community violence. During the first half of the year, Hutu populations in North Kivu were subject to forced displacement by both the SSF and IAGs operating in the area".²⁴⁰

The French Asylum Office (Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides (OFPRA)) produced a French COI report in March 2020 on 'Links between the Kumu and Tutsi communities in the Goma region'.²⁴¹ As the original excerpt in French could not easily be copy-pasted into this report, using an online translation tool, [Onlinedoctranslator.com](https://onlinedoctranslator.com), the following information was translated from French into English tracing the history of the conflict between the Kumu (Hutus) and the Tutsi:

In 1922, the Belgian colonial administration founded the community-chieftdom of the Bakumu in Nyiragongo territory, on the outskirts of Goma.

²³⁷ UNHCR, [Attacks by armed group displace 20,000 civilians in eastern DRC](#), 16 July 2021

²³⁸ Reuters, [Congo blames Islamist militia for dual blasts in eastern city](#), 29 June 2021

²³⁹ Reuters, [Congo blames Islamist militia for dual blasts in eastern city](#), 29 June 2021

²⁴⁰ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 6, Other societal violence or discrimination

²⁴¹ OFPRA, [Links between the Kumu and Tutsi communities in the Goma region](#), 27 March 2020 [Les liens entre les communautés kumu et tutsi dans la région de Goma]

The mwami Kahembe, was chosen by the Belgian administration to lead it. It was about a kumu born in the current eastern province and who gave the name of his ethnic group to the chiefdom.

Kahembe, had two boys, Bigaruka and Butsitsi, the last of which was Tutsi by the mother. He named Bakungu, (son of Bigaruka) as his successor. Like his father, the latter died suddenly, and it was his uncle, Bahame Felicien, who was chosen to act as the head of the chiefdom.

Divisions within the chiefdom arose between the partisans of the Butsitsi clan (Tutsi) and those of the Bigaruka clan (kumu).

The massive arrival of a Rwandophone population in Goma, and the support of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) in 1996, allowed the sons of Butsitsi, Godefroid then Jean-Brosco, to access the head of the Chiefdom of Bukumu.

The population of the chiefdom includes the Hunde, Kumu and allochthonous Hutu, Tutsi and Twa communities who have lived together in this region for several decades. It is currently headed by the mwami Butsitsi Kahembe IV Isaac.

In March 2017, according to the Development Indicator Analysis Unit (CAID), a Congolese state platform for the production of development indicators, the Hunde-Kumu communities, which are located in the south of the region, represented 29% of the population of the territory of Nyiragongo, against 10% of Tutsi, settled mainly in the north.

Customary and succession conflicts persist and still strongly affect the security climate in the region.

Recent demonstrations demanding the enthronement of the customary chief Lebon Bakungu Bigaruka as head of the Bukumu chiefdom have been violently repressed by the police in the territory of Nyiragongo.²⁴²

As to the 'problematic cohabitation', the same COI report found:

The Banyarwanda have been regularly accused of violating the ancestral rights of customary chiefs in the region for several decades and of imposing their dominant culture on other communities.

Thus, the Kumu and other indigenous communities living in the Goma region have integrated the socio-cultural models of the Banyarwanda and speak Kinyarwanda. Religious sermons were also given in this language until 1992.

In addition, almost all the names of the volcanoes in the region, and more precisely of the Virunga National Park are in Kinyarwanda. The name of the territory "Nyiragongo" means "That which has several dowries", for example.

This region has been the setting for many "identity" conflicts opposing the Banyarwanda to other local groups that were established in the past.

Indeed, hundreds of thousands of Banyarwanda able to trace their origins in the DRC since 1960, and who should be nationals, encounter systematic difficulties to be recognized as Congolese.

Stigmatized, they remain seen as strangers in the eyes of the Kumu and are accused of supporting armed groups such as the AFDL or the M23.

The "anti-Tutsi" ideology remains rooted in indigenous communities who demand that all groups of Rwandan origin "return to their homes".

The massive exodus of Rwandans fleeing their country in 1994 exacerbated tensions between Kinyarwanda-speaking natives and other communities.

To date, issues related to the status of Congolese Banyarwanda and the return of refugees from Rwanda remain unresolved.

The land issue is also a problem that feeds many inter- and intra-community tensions. The arrival of Banyarwanda intensified the competition for land. Traditional rulers who wield political influence through ownership of land violently contest their presence. The resulting attacks by the various armed groups target all the communities present in the Goma region.

Despite this climate of insecurity, all the communities seem to want to pacify intercommunal

²⁴² OFPRA, [Links between the Kumu and Tutsi communities in the Goma region](#), 27 March 2020 [Les liens entre les communautés kumu et tutsi dans la région de Goma], p. 4

relations in the region. Mediation actions are undertaken to prevent and settle disputes over property or land tenure. During a recent electoral assembly, leaders were elected by the Tutsi community in order to promote "the maintenance of good relations with other communities in North Kivu and to participate in the promotion of peace in the east of the country. by supporting the institutions of the Republic ".²⁴³

6.2. South Kivu

This section provides a broad overview of insecurity in the province. The security events included below are not exhaustive and only represent a portion of the reporting on individual events.

August - December 2019

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 29 June and 25 September 2019:

The overall security situation in South Kivu remained tense and unpredictable, with eight out of the nine territories of the Province affected by local and foreign armed groups. In Kalehe and Shabunda territories, the Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki and other members of local armed group reactivated their support networks, reportedly with the tacit support of some local politicians, following the movement of the Conseil national pour le renouveau démocratique and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) into the area. This also triggered the intensification of confrontations between FARDC and local armed groups in Bunyakiri, as well as renewed rivalries with FARDC for the control of mining areas in Shabunda territory.²⁴⁴

The same source further highlighted with regards to Uvira and Fizi territories:

insecurity and recurrent armed confrontations continued to adversely affect the population. Intercommunal conflict between Banyamulenge groups, supported by the Gumino and Twigwaneho militias, and the Babembe, Bafuliru and Banyindu communities, supported by various Mai-Mai groups, resulted in serious human rights violations in the Minembwe area of Fizi territory. The continued presence of Burundian and Rwandan armed groups in the Province made the situation even more volatile. Approximately 200,000 people remained displaced owing to continued insecurity.²⁴⁵

The Group of Experts on the DRC, as mandated by a UN Security Council resolution, reported in its report covering August to November 2019:

Since September 2019, civilians in Minembwe, Uvira Territory, experienced an upsurge in violence between communities backed by armed groups. A Mai-Mai armed group coalition led by Mai-Mai Yakutumba supported the Babembe, Bafuliru, Bavira and Banyindu communities in clashes against the Banyamulenge community, which was supported by Ngomino and Twigwaneho armed groups [...]

The Banyamulenge members reported that since February 2019, the Mai-Mai coalition had targeted their community in the Moyens Plateaux of Uvira and carried out various attacks

²⁴³ OFPRA, [Links between the Kumu and Tutsi communities in the Goma region](#), 27 March 2020 [Les liens entre les communautés kumu et tutsi dans la région de Goma], p. 4/5

²⁴⁴ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 27 September 2019, para. 21

²⁴⁵ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 27 September 2019, para. 22

during which people were killed, cows were looted and houses were burned down. [...] Members of the Bafuliru, Babembe and Banyindu communities reported that since May 2019, their leaders had been killed by Banyamulenge-affiliated armed groups. There was mass displacement of civilians and destruction of property in the villages around Minembwe. The Group notes with concern the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation and will monitor further developments.²⁴⁶

The New Humanitarian in October 2019 noted that:

More than 200,000 people have fled fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo's South Kivu highlands in recent months as a long-simmering struggle over land, power, and citizenship descends into village burnings and widespread killings.²⁴⁷

Following a MONUSCO led-mission in November 2019 to South Kivu to "assess the status of the protection of civilians as well as the security and humanitarian situation following the displacement of civilians caused by constant intercommunal clashes between armed groups in the Fizi and Uvira " Haut Plateaux""", the following observations were made:

mutual mistrust is still observed between local communities.
Armed groups' activism poses threats to civilians through killings, cattle theft and arson.
Lack of trust between local community and FARDC is also noticed in the region.
On the humanitarian front, IDPs have expressed a strong need for shelter, food and medicine.
Internally displaced persons are estimated at 7,330 in and around Minembwe.²⁴⁸

On Fizi and Uvira territories, between 29 September and 25 November 2019, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

Ethnically motivated violence against civilians on the high and middle plateaus of Fizi and Uvira territories remains a major source of concern, in particular in the Minembwe area. Since March 2019, Ngumino, Twigwaneho and Mai-Mai groups have killed at least 44 civilians and destroyed 89 villages. Worryingly, these attacks have targeted civilians on the basis of their perceived community affiliation, with the Banyamulenge particularly affected on one hand, and the Bafuliro, Babembe and Banyindu, on the other. The situation has deteriorated sharply since October [2019], with a growing risk of the violence spreading to neighbouring provinces. There are many displaced civilians, especially in the Minembwe area, and humanitarian concerns are growing because the insecurity limits access to the area and adequate health facilities are far away. Fearing further attacks, hundreds of these displaced civilians have sought protection in the vicinity of MONUSCO bases.²⁴⁹

Regarding Shabunda territory, the same report noted:

In Shabunda Territory, the redeployment of FARDC to other areas has increased the freedom of action of Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki armed groups, which has led to a deterioration of the security situation and an increase in exactions against civilians.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 20 December 2019, paras. 30, 32 and 33

²⁴⁷ New Humanitarian, [In eastern Congo, a local conflict flares as regional tensions rise](#), 28 October 2019

²⁴⁸ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), [Sud-Kivu: UN Team on joint assessment mission to Minembwe](#), 8 November 2019

²⁴⁹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 26 November 2019, para. 17

²⁵⁰ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 26 November 2019, para. 18

Reporting on developments in the DRC between 26 November 2019 and 16 March 2020, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview on South Kivu:

The situation in South Kivu remained volatile owing to the concurrent presence of intercommunal conflict and foreign armed groups. FARDC launched operations against the Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie in Kalehe territory on 26 November 2019. Combatants from the Conseil national and their dependants dispersed in response, with 600 dependants seeking shelter near a MONUSCO temporary base. In December [2019], FARDC transferred some 362 Conseil national foreign combatants and 1,471 dependants to Rwanda. In Fizi and Uvira territories, violence continued in the high and middle plateau area between Banyamulenge groups on one side and Babembe, Bafulero and Banyindu on the other. However, the level of violence was lower than during the second half of 2019.²⁵¹

Human Rights Watch, basing the following on documented violence by the Kivu Security Tracker directed against civilians noted that:

[...] According to the Kivu Security Tracker, which documents violence in eastern Congo, assailants, including state security forces, killed at least 720 civilians and abducted or kidnapped for ransom more than 1,275 others in North Kivu and South Kivu in 2019. [...]²⁵²

2020

The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research reported on the following armed group attacks and conflict in North and South Kivu in 2020:

[...] In the DR Congo (DRC), three conflicts were fought on war-level. The government's campaign against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) escalated to a war [→ DR Congo (ADF)]. This year, the conflict's dynamics centred in DRC, with no violent measure recorded in Uganda. Mostly based in North Kivu province, ADF was allegedly involved in 289 violent incidents, resulting in at least 1,483 fatalities. Several large-scale military operations throughout the year managed to occupy ADF's main bases. Nevertheless, the group mostly maintained its support and recruitment network. [...] A third, highly violent conflict continued in the provinces of North and South Kivu, Maniema, as well as Tanganyika. Competing militant groups such as the MayiMayi factions, the Nduma Defense of Congo-Renovated, and other militias rooted in local communities continued to fight over territory and resources, also frequently clashing with the Congolese military [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)].

[...] The most active groups in North Kivu were the Nduma Defense of Congo-Renovated (NDC-R), Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo (APCLS), and the Collective Movement for Change (CMC) comprising Nyatura groups, whereas in South Kivu Raia Mutomboki (RM) factions and armed groups affiliated with the Banyamulenge community, on the one hand, and Bafuliuro, Babembe, and Banyindi communities, on the other, dominated the conflict dynamics. NDC-R remained active and operated in North Kivu territories Rutshuru, Masisi, and Walikale, extending both the territory under its control and its troop strength by co-opting fighters from other armed groups. NDC-R leader Shimirayi Mwisha Guidon further coordinated the Réseau des patriotes résistants congolais (RPRC), a coalition of armed groups including Mayi-Mayi Kifuafua, Mayi-Mayi Simba, Mayi-Mayi GuidesMouvement acquis au changement, Mayi-Mayi Mazembe Union pour la protection des innocents (UPDI), and Raia Mutomboki (RM) groups. In addition, APCLS-R had joined forces with NDC-R in late 2018 after the faction led by Mapenzi Bulere Likuwe had split from APCLS. The operational area controlled by NDC-R and their allies extended to cover Masisi, Walikale, Lubero, and Rutshuru territories in early 2020. Moreover, FARDC supported NDC-R activities targeting the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and provided logistical support [→ DR Congo, Rwanda (FDLR,

²⁵¹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2020, paras. 18 and 19

²⁵² Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2020](#) [Events in 2019], 2020

CNRD)]. NDC-R activities targeted Nyatura groups, mainly Nyatura APRCD, Nyatura Domi. Other groups organized within the CMC as well as the Mayi-Mayi Forces populaires de paix (FPP) in Masisi territory. In Rutshuru territory, NDC-R targeted the APCLS and FDLR. Furthermore, NDC-R targeted civilians in all regions they controlled. Discontent among NDC-R commanders and allies increased with Guidon's rule over the equitable sharing of internal resources, the loss of control over several mining sites and the inability to counter FDLR's influence. Subsequently, NDC-R commanders Gilbert Bwira and Mapenzi Likuhe dismissed Guidon, resulting in the split of the group. On June 8, NDC-R fighters led by Bwira and supported by FARDC attacked Guidon at the NDC-R headquarters in Pinga locality, Walikale. Alerted by a FARDC officer, Guidon escaped and regrouped with remaining followers in Walikale. Heavy infighting between the Bwira wing and the Guidon wing of NDC-R marked NDC-R's activity in the second half of the year, especially in Walikale. For instance, 17 people were killed and seven injured in a clash between Bwira-led and Guidon-led fighters on July 14 in the villages of Byamba and Bukucha. On July 20, NDC-R Bwira, supported by FARDC, clashed with NDC-R Guidon in Pinga, killing 37 people and leaving twelve injured. On September 4, NDC-R Bwira fighters shot and killed a civilian, whom they suspected of collaborating with NDC-R Guidon, in Mutongo village. The Bwira wing was often supported by FARDC. For instance, on October 14, FARDC and NDC-R Bwira attacked NDC-R Guidon in the villages of Nkingwa, Twamakuru, Koko, and Mpama, killing eleven people. [...] FDLR was mainly active in Rutshuru territory, North Kivu province, DRC [...]. Overall, FDLR [...] activity significantly decreased, mainly due to the ongoing military operation Sokola 2 by the Armed Forces of the DR Congo (FARDC) and pressure from other armed groups [→ DR Congo (Mayi-Mayi et al.)]. [...]

On April 24, FARDC launched military operations against FDLR. At least seven civilians were killed and up to 250 houses burned. Following an operation targeting inter alia FDLR-Forces Combattants Abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) elements, FARDC announced that one of their self-proclaimed generals was killed on August 28 in Makoka locality, Rutshuru. Although weakened by FARDC operations, FDLR and CNRD attacks continued throughout the year. In the first half of the year, attacks attributed to FDLR increased in Nyiragongo and Rutshuru territories, with at least 21 civilians killed. On April 24, suspected FDLR-FOCA members ambushed and killed 13 rangers and four civilians in Virunga National Park. In the latter half of the year, following the redeployment of some FARDC units, FDLR and CNRD began to recruit actively in the northern part of South Kivu, especially among young people in Kalehe. [...]

On April 24, suspected FDLR-FOCA members ambushed and killed 13 rangers and four civilians in Virunga National Park. In the latter half of the year, following the redeployment of some FARDC units, FDLR and CNRD began to recruit actively in the northern part of South Kivu, especially among young people in Kalehe. [...] ²⁵³

An analytical note published by OHCHR-MONUSCO covering the period between February 2019 and June 2020 in the highlands of Mwenga, Fizi and Uvira territories found:

171 violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law committed in the context of the conflict in the areas of Mikenge, Minembwe and Itombwe by armed groups and defense and security forces (in particular FARDC soldiers). Of these violations and abuses, 85% are attributable to armed groups and nearly 15% to the FARDC. According to the information collected and analysed by the UNJHRO, 38% of the victims are from the Banyamulenge community, 25% Bafuliiru, 13% Banyindu, 12% Bashi and 9% Bembe

The violations and abuses documented include 76 violations of the right to life (128 victims of summary or extrajudicial executions, including 21 women and seven children, and 19 people who received death threats), 39 violations of the right to physical integrity with 47 victims of conflict-related sexual violence (42 women and

²⁵³ Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, [Conflict Barometer 2020](#), 2021 [Analyzed Period: 01/01/20 – 12/31/20]

five children) and 39 victims of other violations of the right to physical integrity (including six women and 10 children), 10 violations of the right to liberty and security of the person (34 victims including eight women) and 46 violations of the right to property (looting and burning of houses). In addition, it was reported that thousands of cattle belonging to the Banyamulenge were either killed, mutilated or looted during this period.

The UNJHRO also documented the destruction of at least 95 villages, which were burnt down by combatants of different armed groups in the context of retaliation and counter retaliation against members of the communities involved. Thirty-two of these villages were inhabited by Banyamulenge, 37 by other communities (Babembe, Bafuliiru Bavira, Banyindu) and 26 villages had mixed populations. The destruction of these villages caused the massive displacement of the civilian population and the loss of the livelihoods of entire families.²⁵⁴

Reporting on developments in the DRC between 26 November 2019 and 16 March 2020, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview on South Kivu:

The situation in South Kivu remained volatile owing to the concurrent presence of intercommunal conflict and foreign armed groups. [...]

As at 31 January, MONUSCO deployed three temporary bases to Mikenge, Bijombo and Kipupu, which provided protection to 3,720 individuals from all communities. The Mission's presence also helped to alleviate humanitarian concerns. For example, MONUSCO systematically accompanied internally displaced persons to their fields and to local markets and provided security for humanitarian agencies to carry out their activities.²⁵⁵

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 17 March and 16 June 2020:

In South Kivu, renewed violence along ethnic lines broke out in the wider Minembwe area, with over 30 civilians killed since the beginning of the year. In Bijombo, clashes between local Twigwaneho militias and Mai-Mai fighters have occurred on a weekly basis, triggering several MONUSCO interventions. In late April [2020], FARDC clashed with Mai-Mai groups for several consecutive days in the Minembwe area, resulting in multiple casualties. An estimated 130,000 people remain internally displaced, with few prospects of returning in the near future owing to the unstable security situation [...]

In Kalehe territory, there was renewed activity of combatants of the Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie, who had previously been scattered during FARDC operations in December 2019. A group of nearly 100 Conseil combatants was also reported in the Ruzizi Plain area in Uvira territory. The protracted insecurity affecting Fizi, Mwenga and Uvira territories has required FARDC to concentrate their forces there, leaving a vacuum that has enabled Raia Mutomboki groups to move more freely in Kalehe, Mwenga, Shabunda and Walungu territories. [...]

The security situation also deteriorated in the border area of South Kivu, Maniema and Tanganyika Provinces owing to activity of Twa militias and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale. Following a reported surge in sexual violence committed by these groups, MONUSCO deployed a

²⁵⁴ OHCHR-MONUSCO, [*Analytical note on the human rights situation in the highlands of Mwenga, Fizi and Uvira territories, South Kivu province, between February 2019 and June 2020*](#), August 2020, paras. 5-7

²⁵⁵ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 18 March 2020, paras. 18 and 19

temporary base as a deterrent. Mai-Mai Malaika activity in Kabambare territory, Maniema Province, also continued to cause forced displacement.²⁵⁶

Describing the security situation in South Kivu between 17 June and 18 September 2020, the UN Secretary-General noted in his report that:

The security situation in the highlands worsened considerably and was characterized by tit-for-tat militia attacks against civilians. The former FARDC Colonel Michel Rukunda, alias Makanika, who has been active since January 2020, consolidated his control over the Twigwaneho armed groups and led several raids in the Kamombo area, killing six civilians and destroying 15 schools and seven health centres. Many Babembe, Bafuliro and Banyindu community members fled the area, increasing the number of internally displaced persons in Bijombo, where MONUSCO is deployed, to 6,725 (1,122 men, 1,253 women and 4,350 children). In Mikenge, MONUSCO continued to provide protection to 2,037 internally displaced persons (328 men, 409 women and 1,300 children), most of whom are members of the Banyamulenge community. MONUSCO troops repeatedly intervened to prevent attacks on internally displaced person sites.²⁵⁷

The same report further noted:

In late July, there was a further upsurge in violence in the highlands, following a Mai-Mai raid on Banyamulenge cattle and a subsequent Twigwaneho retaliatory attack on Kipupu. A joint government-MONUSCO verification mission to Kipupu on 29 July [2020] determined that a total of 15 civilians, including the Kipupu locality chief, had been killed during the clashes.²⁵⁸

With regards to the northern part of South Kivu, the UN report stated:

following a security vacuum created by the redeployment of some FARDC units to other conflict hotspots, the former Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)/Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie began to recruit actively, especially among young people in Kalehe territory. The humanitarian and security situation in the border area between Maniema, South Kivu and Tanganyika also further deteriorated in the context of continued FARDC redeployments. The territories of Kabambare and, to a lesser extent, Kasongo, continued to be affected by the activities of Mai-Mai Malaika, resulting in the displacement of more than 1,500 families. MONUSCO also received reports of regular incursions of Twa combatants from Tanganyika into Maniema.²⁵⁹

The Kivu Security Tracker reported that despite a ceasefire agreement signed near Bukavu in mid-September 2020, “Despite a slight fall in the number of clashes and civilians killed, abducted, and kidnapped compared to August [2020], the level of violence remained high in September [2020, well above historical monthly averages since the Kivu Security Tracker (KST) started collecting such data in June 2017”.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 18 June 2020, paras. 13-15

²⁵⁷ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 21 September 2020, para. 14

²⁵⁸ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 21 September 2020, para. 15

²⁵⁹ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 21 September 2020, para. 16

²⁶⁰ Kivu Security Tracker, [*Ceasefire in Murhesa, Little Impact on the Ground, Monthly Report No 35 – September 2020*](#), September 2020, p. 1

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering 25 April 2020 to 19 November 2020:

The Group of Experts is concerned by, and continues to investigate, the escalation of violence in the highlands of Fizi, Uvira and Mwenga territories by armed groups and the attribution of collective responsibility to communities for their attacks, as well as inflammatory speech.²⁶¹

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 19 September and 1 December 2020:

The security situation deteriorated in the Hauts Plateaux of Minembwe, amid persistent inter-ethnic strife. FARDC reduced the rate of its operations owing to the redeployment of units outside South Kivu and logistical challenges. Seven of the eight territories in South Kivu were affected by harassment, looting, razing of dwellings, cattle rustling and attacks against civilians by armed groups. The Hauts Plateaux of Fizi, Mwenga and Uvira territories, comprising the zones of Bijombo, Mikenge and Minembwe were the most insecure areas in South Kivu, with 131 attacks against civilians recorded, resulting in at least 38 civilians killed (including 15 women and 1 child) and 22 injured. The situation deteriorated further following the official installation of a member of the Banyamulenge community as the mayor of Minembwe, which triggered demonstrations led by members of the Babembe, Bafuliro and Banyindu communities. In Bijombo, internally displaced persons remained the target of opportunistic attacks by armed militias. Five direct attacks against internally displaced persons resulted in 8 civilians killed or wounded, mostly women, in addition to 18 cases of rape and sexual violence. In the territory of Fizi, four humanitarian workers were kidnapped [...]

Violence also persisted in the Ruzizi plain of Uvira territory, as well as throughout Kalehe, Walungu, Kabare and Shabunda territories. This was due in part to limited FARDC deployments and the return of several leaders of Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki to South Kivu after a failed attempt to demobilize. In Kalehe territory, the insufficient deployment of FARDC enabled ongoing armed group activity and increased recruitment in Kalonge and Ziralo groupements. Meanwhile in Shabunda, there was a surge in violence, including sexual violence, by Raia Mutomboki groups. In the Ruzizi plain, Mai-Mai Kijangala and local gangs have been active in cattle rustling, imposing illegal taxation and directly attacking villages, while in Muturule four civilians from the Banyamulenge community were allegedly kidnapped by armed elements from Burundi on 17 October.²⁶²

2021

Reporting on developments in South Kivu between 2 December 2020 and 18 March 2021, the UN Secretary-General report stated that

In South Kivu [...] the security situation improved, as the number of human rights violations and attacks against civilians declined. However, clashes between community-based armed groups led to an upsurge of violence in Fizi and Shabunda territories in South Kivu [...]

On 1 January [2021], more than 50 civilians, including six women, were killed in Bijombo and more than 500 households were displaced. Meanwhile, sexual violence escalated in northern Shabunda following confrontations on 24 December [2020] between Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki factions and the killing of two leaders, Mabala and Walike.²⁶³

²⁶¹ UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 23 December 2020, *Summary*

²⁶² UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 November 2020, *paras. 15 and 16*

²⁶³ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, *para. 21*

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering November 2020 to 23rd April 2021:

In South Kivu, violent clashes and attacks escalated in the Hauts-Plateaux of Fizi, Uvira and Mwenga territories, mainly between Twirwaneho, which became an organized armed group, and a new ad hoc Mai-Mai coalition, of which Mai-Mai Yakutumba was part. Mai-Mai groups and Twirwaneho obtained weapons and ammunition, including through attacks on FARDC, in-country trafficking and diversion of FARDC weaponry. Collusion between some of those groups and FARDC members fuelled the conflict. Attacks against civilians and armed clashes caused massive forced displacement and resulted in the ethnicization of geographical space. Combatants of Twirwaneho and the Mai-Mai coalition committed conflict-related sexual violence and abductions. Some discourse incited discrimination, hostility and violence.²⁶⁴

The same report further noted:

The security and humanitarian situation in the Hauts-Plateaux of Fizi, Uvira and Mwenga territories (Hauts-Plateaux) worsened since 2019 [...] in a cycle of retaliatory attacks that resulted in the destruction of villages, killings of civilians, rapes, mass displacements and cattle-looting, particularly concentrated around Minembwe, Mikenge and Bijombo. Clashes and reprisals, sometimes involving FARDC members, escalated and involved armed group coalitions mainly linked to Babembe, Bafuliru, Banyindu and Bavira communities on one side and the Banyamulenge community on the other. The conflict's roots and drivers are complex and go beyond ethnic tensions or inter-community hostilities. They also include access to land and resources, such as transhumance and cattlelooting [...] and local governance, although ethnicity was increasingly used by both sides to justify mobilization and the use of force.²⁶⁵

More detailed information on the above can be found in the UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 10 June 2021, paras. 133-155.

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 19 March and 18 June 2021, the security situation in South Kivu was as follows:

In South Kivu, the Hauts Plateaux of Uvira, Fizi and Mwenga, the territories of Kabare, Kalehe, Shabunda and Walungu, and the south of Fizi territory, as well as the neighbouring Kabambare territory in Maniema Province, experienced a sustained upsurge in armed violence [...] In the Hauts Plateaux of Uvira, Fizi and Mwenga, hate speech and attacks persisted between community-based armed groups, pitting members of the Banyamulenge community against members of the Bafuliru and Babembe communities. Since 8 April [2021], clashes between the Mai-Mai Gumino and Twigwaneho armed groups on one side and the Mai-Mai Ilunga and Mai-Mai Mushombe groups on the other, allegedly supported by the Burundian armed group Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi, spread to the Moyens-Plateaux and the Ruzizi plain, which had previously been unaffected by the violence. Between 9 and 24 April [2021], armed groups killed at least 10 civilians and set fire to 70 villages.²⁶⁶

6.3. Ituri

²⁶⁴ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 10 June 2021, *Summary*

²⁶⁵ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 10 June 2021, *para. 132*

²⁶⁶ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 June 2021, paras. 22 and 23

This section provides a broad overview of insecurity in the province. The security events included below are not exhaustive and only represent a portion of the reporting on individual events.

August – December 2019

According to the UN Secretary-General's report, covering major events and developments between 29 June and 25 September 2019, the following was noted with regards to the Irumu, Djugu, and Mahagi territories:

On 23 August [2019], ADF carried out its first multi-day incursion outside of North Kivu, into the Boga area of Irumu territory, Ituri Province. The primary purpose appeared to be resupply with cash, basic goods, cattle and medication. No fatalities were reported, but some 114 civilians, including women and minors, were abducted for forced labour and ransom payments. [...]

Although to a lesser extent than in previous months, these acts of violence persisted in Djugu territory, causing tens of thousands of civilians to flee.

In Mahagi territory, Ituri Province, the reporting period was marked by killings, lootings and the destruction of villages. During attacks on several villages in Djugu and Mahagi territories on 10 and 11 June [2019], at least 117 members of the Alur and Hema communities were killed. There was little military presence during the attacks, which appear to have been coordinated. Despite calls for restraint by community leaders and local authorities, inter-community relations remained strained. Tensions also rose in the Alur community after the killing of at least seven Alur individuals by unidentified armed men in a village near Bunia town on 16 July [2019].²⁶⁷

On Ituri, between 29 September and 25 November 2019, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

In Djugu Territory and neighbouring areas, the number of attacks against civilians has shown a downward trend, following the killing of 37 civilians – 2 of whom were women and 15 children – by armed assailants in September. The reduction in the number of incidents follows mediation efforts by the provincial authorities supported by MONUSCO. Violence has not subsided completely, however, with internally displaced persons at particular risk of attack. In Irumu Territory, where there was continued progress towards the demobilization of the FRPI armed group, the situation remained calm and there were no reports of human rights violations being committed by the group.²⁶⁸

According to ACLED, in December 2019 “the Cooperative for Development of Congo (CODECO) clashed with military forces, whilst also targeting civilian targets, reportedly killing 24 civilians in attacks on December 20 [2019].²⁶⁹

2020

According to information by UNJHRO, as reported by the U.S. Department of State's annual report on human rights covering 2020:

UNJHRO also reported that IAGs killed at least 1,315 civilians, including 129 women, in the first six months of the year [2020], a significant increase from the same period in 2019, during which 416

²⁶⁷ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 27 September 2019, paras. 24, 26 and 27

²⁶⁸ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 26 November 2019, para. 19

²⁶⁹ Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview: Africa 15 December 2019 – 4 January 2020](#), 10 January 2020

civilians were killed. As of June 30 [2020], violence attributed to various Lendu militias in Ituri Province resulted in at least 636 summary executions and an estimated 1.2 million internally displaced persons. Djugu-based assailants in Ituri Province were responsible for killing at least 525 individuals, largely during ambushes and attacks against villages targeting civilians.²⁷⁰

In January 2020, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet concluded a five-day visit to the DRC and reported:

The High Commissioner began her visit in the far north-eastern province of Ituri, just two weeks after her Office published a report produced by the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC describing war crimes and crimes against humanity carried out in Ituri over the past two years, chiefly by a militant Lendu armed group that has been targeting Hema people living in the same areas. The Hema have so far, for the most part, refrained from retaliating. The conflict between the Lendu and Hema is one of several currently taking place in DRC, including elsewhere in Ituri, and in North and South Kivu. [...]

"I decided to visit Ituri, because the situation there generally receives less attention than developments in the Kivus," Bachelet said. "And the abuses inflicted on the Hema have been horrific. In addition, there are signs that the armed group that is primarily responsible for this violence is trying to extend into other areas of the province." This could trigger a much larger conflict reminiscent of the deadly 1999-2003 'Ituri War' which cost tens of thousands of lives. In all, there are close to 1.1 million displaced people in Ituri, including around 500,000 as a result of the Lendu-Hema conflict, with 50,000 newly displaced in the first three weeks of January [2020] alone. Only around 15 percent are in camps, with the rest taken into other people's homes.

"Displacement on that scale would be front-page news in many other parts of the world," the High Commissioner said. "When it happens in Ituri, no one outside the DRC seems to know or care."²⁷¹

Reporting on developments in the DRC between 26 November 2019 and 16 March 2020, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview on Ituri:

The situation in Ituri deteriorated as a result of the movement of dispersed ADF members from the Beni area into Irumu and Mambasa territories and subsequent attacks against civilians. It is estimated that some 250,000 civilians have been displaced since the beginning of 2020 owing to that development. Separately, in Djugu and Mahagi territories, armed assailants continued to target civilians and State security forces. Although the number of incidents showed a downward trend, at least 39 civilians, including 6 women and 3 children, were killed during the reporting period. MONUSCO supported the Ituri Provincial Government in carrying out initiatives in favour of peaceful coexistence between the Alur and Lendu communities in the affected area. On 21 February [2020], a group of assailants withdrew by agreement from villages in Mahagi territory that they had occupied for months. A joint verification team, composed of Alur and Lendu community leaders, witnessed the withdrawal, which was a prerequisite for the continuation of the intercommunal peace process held under the auspices of the provincial authorities, with MONUSCO support [...]

Further progress was made in the negotiations between the Government and the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI). An important milestone was reached on 10 January [2020], when the Council of Ministers endorsed the peace agreement. On 28 February, the Government and FRPI ceremonially signed the peace agreement, bringing to end two decades of violent conflict in Irumu territory. Previously, there had been growing concerns regarding the actions of rogue FRPI members, who had reportedly been committing exactions against

²⁷⁰ U.S. Department of State, [*2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 1. G. Abuses in internal conflict*

²⁷¹ OHCHR, [*DR Congo: Bachelet says new Government has "window of opportunity" after peaceful political transition*](#), 29 January 2020

civilians, stressing the urgency of successfully concluding the demobilization process after months of the pre-cantonment of more than 1,200 FRPI combatants.²⁷²

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its subsequent report covering November 2019 to 25 April 2020:

Almost immediately after the launch of FARDC operations against ADF on 30 October 2019, civilians in Beni territory were targeted in a wave of brutal attacks [...] The attacks expanded to north-western Beni territory, and southern Irumu and Mambasa territories in Ituri [...] Hundreds of civilians were killed during those attacks – some of which were simultaneous – while thousands were displaced as a result. In November and December 2019 alone, over 260 civilians, mainly women and children, were killed, according to MONUSCO. The acute violence triggered, in turn, violent popular reactions, including the lynching of alleged ADF collaborators and attacks against MONUSCO [...].²⁷³

Similarly, ACLED specifically reported on events between 2nd to 8th February 2020:

[...] the ADF shifted attacks on civilian targets from their normal range in North Kivu to the neighbouring province of Ituri in the DRC's northeast corner. ADF militants killed dozens of civilians during several raids on villages in the Mambasa territory. At least another 20 civilians were abducted.²⁷⁴

A week later it was reported by ACLED that:

[...] the Allied Defence Forces (ADF) continued their incursion into the Ituri province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), with a dozen fatalities reported during attacks on civilians in Mambasa territory. Following one such attack, state military forces (FARDC) managed to capture 40 ADF fighters. ADF militants also staged a deadly attack on civilians near the Onokoko mine in North Kivu's Beni territory.²⁷⁵

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering November 2019 to 25 April 2020:

In Beni territory, and in southern Irumu and Mambasa territories, Ituri province, a wave of brutal attacks targeting civilians began in November 2019, almost immediately after the launch of FARDC operations against ADF. Hundreds of civilians were killed and thousands were displaced. ADF combatants were involved in this wave of attacks, including in the killings that took place on 5 December 2019 and 30 January 2020 in Mantumbi, northwest of Beni territory.²⁷⁶

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 17 March and 16 June 2020:

The security situation deteriorated markedly in Djugu and Mahagi territories, as groups of assailants associated with the Walendu community, including the Coopérative pour le

²⁷² UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2020, paras. 20 and 21

²⁷³ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 2 June 2020, paras. 137 and 138

²⁷⁴ [Regional Overview: Africa 2-8 February 2020](#), 13 February 2020

²⁷⁵ Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview: Africa 9-15 February 2020](#), 20 February 2020

²⁷⁶ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 2 June 2020, Summary

développement du Congo, intensified attacks against civilians and security forces. From March to May [2020], at least 333 civilians, including 70 women and 61 children, were killed, and an estimated 300,000 people have been displaced since the beginning of the year. There are indications that the assailants specifically targeted the Wahema and other communities with a view to permanently displacing them from their homes. State security forces and MONUSCO were also attacked. On 17 May, the MONUSCO temporary base in Roe, which is protecting over 20,000 internally displaced persons, came under attack, but successfully repelled the assailants. In March, FARDC launched targeted operations in eastern Djugu territory, resulting in the deaths or arrest of some of the leaders of the assailants. FARDC suffered about 40 casualties. The groups of assailants have splintered and become less cohesive since the loss of several of their leading figures, but the intensity of the attacks has not decreased. [...]

In southern Irumu territory, the security situation has continued to improve since the signing of the peace agreement with the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) in February. Despite delays in the implementation of the demobilization process, due mainly to COVID-19, the FRPI leadership has reaffirmed its commitment to the process. A degree of insecurity has nevertheless persisted, with fringe elements of the group continuing to carry out sporadic exactions against the local population.²⁷⁷

Specifically referring to the attack in April 2020 where “[m]ore than two dozen people were killed” reported Al Jazeera:

in two separate attacks in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo a region in the grip of militia violence, officials said on Wednesday. “CODECO assailants attacked the people of the village of Koli while they were asleep, killing 22 civilians,” said Adel Alingi, head of the Djugu administrative region in Ituri province, referring to an armed group targeting the Hema ethnic community. The raid took place overnight from Saturday to Sunday. “All [of the dead] were from the Hema community,” Alingi told AFP news agency, adding the motive for the attack remained unclear. “The people of the village have fled for their lives,” he said. In the second attack on Tuesday, two soldiers, a civilian and five members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) militia were killed in Beni, in neighbouring North Kivu province, said the army’s regional spokesman Anthony Mualushayi. CODECO – whose official name is Cooperative for the Development of Congo – is an armed political-religious sect in Ituri drawn from the Lendu ethnic group. Conflict between the Lendu, mainly farmers, and the Hema, herders and traders, has a long history in the gold and oil-rich province.²⁷⁸

In May 2020 ACLED reported:

[...] In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Congolese military forces (FARDC) captured a key Cooperative for Development of Congo (CODECO) stronghold in the Djugu territory of Ituri. The successful operation came after a new CODECO leader called for the FARDC to negotiate a ceasefire to allow peace talks with the government. He announced that CODECO would cease operations against civilians and the FARDC, without providing specific timeframe for their demobilization (Reuters, 4 May 2020). Although overtures by CODECO are an important development, the security situation in Ituri will remain complex and fragile. This was highlighted last week by a Patriotic and Integrationist Force of Congo (FPIC) attack on a FARDC camp in Irumu territory. FPIC is the most recently formed group in the region, having only become active this year.²⁷⁹

In June 2020 MONUSCO reported that:

²⁷⁷ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 June 2020, paras. 16 and 17

²⁷⁸ Al Jazeera, [More than two dozen killed in DR Congo armed attack](#), 15 April 2020

²⁷⁹ Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview: Africa 3-9 May 2020](#), 13 May 2020

In recent weeks, the attacks and the nature of violence committed by armed groups have become increasingly atrocious, characterized in particular by sexual violence, beheadings and mutilation of corpses.

Some testimonies even reported acts of cannibalism. According to the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC (UNJHRO), between October 1, 2019 and May 31, 2020, at least 531 civilians were killed by armed groups in Ituri, including 375 since March [2020].²⁸⁰

Already in April 2020, MONUSCO's Chief of Office in Ituri, Cecilia Piazza stated in an interview that "the territory of Djugu continues to go through a very difficult situation. Attackers loot civilian properties, kill innocent people, burn down houses and shops, attack defence and security forces, including MONUSCO peacekeepers".²⁸¹

In June 2020, the UN reported its concerns over the spreading of violence in the Ituri province:

In Ituri province, the violence has spread into new areas as armed groups have multiplied. The principal armed group continues to be CODECO, comprised mainly of fighters from the Lendu community, which has splintered after its main leader, Ngudjolo Duduko Justin, was killed on 25 March. As documented in a UN human rights report published on 10 January 2020 and updated on 27 May, CODECO and other Lendu fighters have pursued a strategy of slaughtering local residents – mainly the Hema, but also the Alur – since 2017, in order to control the natural resources in the region. Other groups, including the Ndo Okebo, Nyali and the Mambisa, have been caught up in the violence more recently. "So far, to their credit, the targeted communities have refrained from retaliating," said Bachelet, who visited Ituri in January and met with people maimed and displaced during brutal attacks by CODECO. "However, in the absence of effective protection by State security forces, there is a serious risk that these communities will feel compelled to form self-defence groups, which would most likely exacerbate an already dire situation." The attacks and the nature of the violence committed by the armed groups have grown increasingly more gruesome, including sexual violence, beheadings and mutilation of corpses. According to the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC (UNJHRO), between 1 October 2019 and 31 May 2020, at least 531 civilians have been killed by armed groups in Ituri, 375 of them since March, when the violence soared. Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) and police (PNC) also allegedly killed 17 civilians during the same period.²⁸²

MONUSCO reported that in July 2020 "With the support of the Congolese National Police (PNC) and Uruguayan peacekeepers of MONUSCO, the Congolese army (FARDC), foiled Friday 10 July 2020 an attack by Codeco militiamen against a large convoy of civilian vehicles at Jitso, a village located 15 kilometers from the Fataki shopping center, in Djugu territory, on the "Route Nationale 27, Ituri province. Sources on the spot claim that the militiamen had camped for two days in this village planning to attack this convoy of a hundred vehicles".²⁸³ The same source reported that a week before "11 people, including police officers, FARDC soldiers, economic operators and political authorities were shot in cold blood by these rebels on the same Route Nationale 27, in Metete more precisely".²⁸⁴

²⁸⁰ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), [MONUSCO reinforces FARDC's operational capacities in the context of the fight against armed groups in Ituri](#), 11 June 2020

²⁸¹ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), [Ituri: MONUSCO condemns the heinous crimes committed in the territory of Djugu and continues to provide support to FARDC](#), 14 April 2020

²⁸² OHCHR, [1,300 civilians killed in the DRC in past eight months – Bachelet](#), 5 June 2020

²⁸³ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), [Attack on civilian convoy in Fataki foiled by MONUSCO and FARDC](#), 14 July 2020

²⁸⁴ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), [Attack on civilian convoy in Fataki foiled by MONUSCO and FARDC](#), 14 July 2020

Describing the security situation in Ituri between 17 June and 18 September 2020, the UN Secretary-General noted in his report that:

In Djugu territory, high levels of violence continued to be attributed to loosely defined Lendu-majority armed groups, including the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) group, with at least 140 reported incidents. In a major attack, on 8 July [2020], assailants raided Bunzenzele village, killing 37 civilians. A total of 11 FARDC members have also been reportedly killed in operations since mid-June. On 4 September [2020], at least 100 Djugu-based assailants entered Bunia and went to the central prison to demand the release of their members who were detained there. Following negotiations with local authorities, defence and security forces escorted the group out of Bunia and the situation returned to relative calm. While the FARDC and MONUSCO prevented several attacks thanks to a robust early warning system, violence has affected a wide area, posing serious challenges to the effective protection of civilians. In Irumu territory, the Front patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo, mostly composed of members of the Bira community, carried out attacks against civilians, killing 22 people, including two women. Acts of violence against civilians decreased somewhat in August after the signature of a peace pledge in Mahagi territory by 42 traditional chiefs and leaders from the Lendu community and the adoption of a road map by 60 local leaders from the Alur community. However, reports of the killing of civilians, including at gold mining sites, continued to be received. Although Mahagi territory remains vulnerable to a spillover of violence from Djugu territory, the reinforcement of the FARDC presence, as well as the community awareness-raising activities conducted by the provincial government with support from MONUSCO, led to a decrease in attacks perpetrated by assailants.²⁸⁵

Reporting on events that took place between 6th and 12th September 2020, ACLED reported:

[...] In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), dozens of Hutu civilians were killed in dual attacks in Ituri's Irumu territory, close to the border with North Kivu. While initial reports suggested that the attacks were carried out by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), conflicting reports from United Nations sources downplayed this attribution (Actualite, 11 September 2020), instead linking the attacks to intercommunal conflict in the area.²⁸⁶

With regards to the implementation of the peace agreement between the Congolese government and the FRPI, the UN reported:

Continued progress in the implementation of the peace agreement between the Government and the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) has had a positive impact on the security situation in southern Irumu. The process will ultimately result in the demobilization of around 1,100 FRPI combatants and their reintegration into their communities of origin. Nevertheless, the demobilization process has not yet commenced, owing to COVID-19-related challenges and lingering disagreements over the FRPI demand for the release from prison of its members, as well as amnesty and integration into the FARDC of some of its leaders.²⁸⁷

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering 25 April 2020 to 19 November 2020:

Violence had displaced 1.6 million people within Ituri by 6 October 2020, according to UNICEF estimates, with children continuing to be affected [...] and being used by armed groups. From

²⁸⁵ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 September 2020, para. 17

²⁸⁶ Armed Conflict Location & Event Date Project (ACLED), [Regional Overview: Africa 6-12 September 2020](#), 17 September 2020

²⁸⁷ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 September 2020, para. 18

mid-July 2020, after a significant deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation in Djugu and Mahagi territories since March, six Lendu factions, 34 commonly known as CODECO,³⁵ signed unilateral ceasefire agreements with a presidential delegation [...] This led to a relative lull in attacks [...]

Western Djugu territory and northern Ituri territory were the most affected by the violence at the time of drafting [...]

This was mainly due to the reluctance of some factions, including one in Nyangaray, Djugu territory, led by a certain Tuwo, to join the ceasefire process, as well as to the Armée de libération du Congo (ALC/CODECO) self-exclusion from that process and to the rise and activities of the majority-Bira Force patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo (FPIC), which conducted attacks against Congolese security forces and civilians [...].²⁸⁸

In October 2020 MONUSCO reported that it had “reinforced its security system on the outskirts of the town of Bunia, in Ituri, after rebels from the CODECO / ALC (Alliance for the Liberation of Congo) armed group, which was resistant to the peace process, attempted an incursion into this city. The militiamen loyal to the rebel leader called “Mountain Wolf” attacked, very early on Saturday, October 24, 2020, an FARDC position near Dele, 6 km south-east of Bunia”.²⁸⁹

MONUSCO reported that at the end of November 2020 “at least 9 people, including 6 children and 3 women, were killed in a militia attack [...] in Bule. Three other people, seriously injured in the attack, were evacuated by MONUSCO Bangladeshi peacekeepers to the hospital in Bule”.²⁹⁰ The representative of the Women in Djugu, Prisca Acae-Mola, told the deputy head of MONUSCO during his visit to Ituri:

The Iturian woman is abandoned to massacres. She is raped, tortured, impregnated without her consent, not to mention the massacres perpetrated against her because she cares about her children... Women in Ituri and Djugu territory are fed up! Therefore, we say no to exactions, no to violence of any kind, no to killings.²⁹¹

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering 25 April 2020 to 19 November 2020:

In Ituri, the signing of ceasefire agreements beginning in mid-July 2020 by Lendu armed groups, commonly known as Coopérative pour le développement du Congo or CODECO, marked a relative lull in attacks in Djugu and Mahagi territories. At the time of drafting of the present report, western Djugu territory and northern Ituri territory were the most affected by violence, primarily due to the reluctance of some Lendu factions to adhere to the ceasefire process and activities of the recently created Force patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo armed group and the selfdefence group Zaïre.²⁹²

According to the UN Secretary-General’s report covering major events and developments between 19 September and 1 December 2020:

²⁸⁸ UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 23 December 2020, para. 48

²⁸⁹ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), [FARDC and MONUSCO have deterred CODECO rebel incursion into Bunia](#), 28 October 2020

²⁹⁰ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), [Ituri: Faced with the exactions by armed groups, the women in Djugu raised the alarm with MONUSCO](#), 2 December 2020

²⁹¹ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), [Ituri: Faced with the exactions by armed groups, the women in Djugu raised the alarm with MONUSCO](#), 2 December 2020

²⁹² UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 23 December 2020, Summary

The security situation in Ituri improved slightly, compared with the previous reporting period, mainly as a result of a decrease in attacks by the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) and other, mainly Walendu community, armed militia groups in Djugu territory. Notwithstanding ongoing negotiations led by a delegation of former armed group leaders sent by President Tshisekedi, various factions and groups have yet to reach a consensus and cease hostilities. CODECO and the other factions continue to target civilians, including through harassment and extortion. From 3 to 9 October [2020], more than 15 incidents involving CODECO elements were reported, resulting in the killing of at least 11 civilians, including 3 women and 2 children [...]

In Irumu territory, the Front patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo (FPIC) continues to threaten civilians and launch attacks on FARDC. Against the background of the government-negotiated peace process with the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI), human rights violations decreased in the area compared with the previous reporting period. Frustrations surrounding delays in the peace process boiled over on 30 September when FRPI attacked the proposed disarmament and demobilization sites in Karatsi and Kazana, looting and destroying equipment and supplies in the camps. In addition, Mai-Mai and ADF activity continued in Irumu and Mambasa territories along the border areas of Ituri and North Kivu. The increased presence of those armed groups also fuelled underlying tensions between the Nande, Nyali and Hutu communities, who accuse one another of supporting the movement of those armed groups into the area.²⁹³

2021

Reporting on developments in Ituri between 2 December 2020 and 18 March 2021, the UN Secretary-General report stated that

the security situation deteriorated because of continued attacks on civilians and State security and defence forces by the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) and the Front patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo (FPIC) on the outskirts of Bunia town. On 7 January [2021], a retaliatory attack in the Lengabo neighbourhood by FPIC against a search operation carried out by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) resulted in the killing of at least one civilian.²⁹⁴

Specifically reporting on the Irumu territory, the source noted:

In Irumu territory, the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) committed exactions, while the implementation of the peace agreement signed between the Government and FRPI remained stalled. Suspected Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) fighters carried out 15 attacks in the southern part of Irumu, targeting civilians and FARDC. On 13 January, another suspected ADF attack resulted in the alleged killing of 16 civilians, including 6 women and 8 children, from the Mbuti community in Avombi village.²⁹⁵

Whilst in Djugu territory the source stated: "In Djugu territory, CODECO factions carried out attacks against FARDC positions and committed exactions against civilians. Internal clashes for the control of several gold mine sites in northern and western areas of Djugu continued".²⁹⁶

²⁹³ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 November 2020, paras. 17 and 18

²⁹⁴ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 13

²⁹⁵ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 15

²⁹⁶ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 16

With regards to inter-communal violence, according to the same source:

Intercommunal tensions between the Bira and Hema communities continued to increase in the wake of FPIC attacks on civilians. Between 2 December 2020 and 2 February 2021, over 55 incidents were attributed to FPIC, resulting in the killing of at least 37 civilians, including at least 4 women. Moreover, FPIC continued looting, torching homes, abducting civilians and recruiting members. These incidents triggered an increase in retaliatory attacks in the Irumu and Djugu territories by Zaire, an armed group mostly composed of young people from the Hema community.²⁹⁷

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering November 2020 to 23rd April 2021:

In Ituri, the lack of progress towards a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process for factions of the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) contributed to the gradual deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in Djugu territory. Attacks on FARDC bases, the diversion of FARDC weaponry and cross-border trafficking resulted in CODECO factions' increased use of small arms and light weapons. Bon Temple combatants led by Tuwo committed acts of gang rape, forced marriage and sexual slavery in gold-rich Banyali-Kilo. The Group also documented killings of civilians, including children, by CODECO combatants. CODECO factions attacked and occupied gold mines and pillaged gold trading centres in Djugu territory, notably at Mongbwalu, a gold hub. In Irumu territory, Force patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo (FPIC) conducted deadly attacks targeting the security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and mainly non-Bira civilians and used children as combatants. Zaire selfdefence group continued to operate in Irumu and Djugu territories and were involved in armed clashes with CODECO factions and FPIC and in attacks against Bira and Lendu civilians. Zaire mined gold and defended gold mines in both territories. In parallel, members of the Democratic Republic of the Congo security forces deployed in Djugu and Irumu territories committed exactions, including conflictrelated sexual violence, in particular against the Lendu and Bira populations considered as affiliated to CODECO and FPIC, respectively.²⁹⁸

In April 2021 the UN reported that “UNICEF said nearly 175 grave violations have occurred across Ituri since January, such as recruitment of children into armed groups, killing and maiming of children, sexual violence and attacks on schools and hospitals. In most cases, humanitarians were denied full access to the areas most affected by violence in Djugu and Irumu territories. The attacks have displaced a large number of people, UNICEF said, and more than 275 children, including 118 girls, have been separated from their parents”.²⁹⁹

At the end of May 2021 the UN reported that “At least 55 people were killed, and many others wounded, in the overnight assaults [...] which targeted camps hosting internally displaced people near the towns of Boga in Irumu territory, Ituri province[...] They were carried out by suspected members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) armed group”.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 14

²⁹⁸ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 10 June 2021, Summary

²⁹⁹ UN News, [DR Congo: 'Relentless' violence worsening plight of children in Ituri province](#), 26 April 2021

³⁰⁰ UN News, [UN chief condemns deadly attacks targeting displaced people in DR Congo](#), 2 June 2021

In May 2021, International Crisis Group's CrisisWatch reported that "In Ituri, armed forces early-May launched offensive against Patriotic and Integrationist Front of Congo (FPIC), notably causing 15,000 civilians to flee Nyakunde locality and killing nine FPIC militia".³⁰¹

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 19 March and 18 June 2021, the security situation in Ituri was as follows:

The security situation has deteriorated owing to increased armed group activity, particularly in Djugu and Irumu territories. Between 19 March and 10 May [2021], 159 civilians, including 31 women and 15 children, were killed, and 52 civilians, including 8 women, were injured in incidents involving armed groups [...]

In Djugu territory, the intensity of the attacks by the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) on the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) was even greater than in the period leading up to the cessation of hostilities in 2020. Between 10 and 17 April [2021], 23 attacks against FARDC and civilians were recorded in eastern Djugu, in which 35 civilians were killed, including 7 women and 4 children. In some cases, these attacks prompted retaliation from the armed group Zaire. Since 10 April [2021], MONUSCO has repelled armed group incursions in N'Bassa, Nyekese/Dhele, Yikpa, Schubert, Kasigbana and Kaa villages. The violence has triggered the displacement of civilians, with an estimated 5,000 internally displaced persons seeking protection near the MONUSCO temporary operating base in Fataki [...]

In Irumu territory, between 19 March and 16 June [2021], Front patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo (FPIC), Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) and Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) assailants killed 70 civilians, including 17 women and 8 children, near the border with North Kivu. Between 18 April and 2 May [2021], FARDC and FPIC elements clashed in Marabo and Niakunde, while FPIC attacked Nyara on 20 April [2021], killing 10 civilians, including 6 children. These incidents triggered population displacement along the Bunia-Komanda road, where MONUSCO increased its patrols. On 31 May [2021], attacks by unknown assailants in Tshabi and Boga resulted in the deaths of at least 56 civilians, including 30 internally displaced persons, injuries to at least 14 civilians, including 1 girl, and the abduction of at least 10 civilians. In addition, FRPI elements continued to loot local communities, undermining stabilization efforts in Irumu.³⁰²

6.3.1. Violence directed against the Hutu population

See also information included in section [6.1.1. Violence directed against the Hutu population](#), in North Kivu.

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering 25 April 2020 to 19 November 2020:

In southern Irumu territory, the number of attacks against civilians from all communities by armed groups coming from North Kivu, including ADF, increased with FARDC operations [...] leading to a large displacement of population and exacerbating tensions between communities. At least one attack targeted Hutu, also referred to as Banyabwisha, migrants in particular [...]

Since at least the 2000s, Hutu/Banyabwisha migrants have bought uncleared land from local chiefs in south Irumu territory for agriculture, on which they later artisanally mined gold. Almost all sources described a strong anti-Hutu/Banyabwisha sentiment among many

³⁰¹ International Crisis Group, [CrisisWatch](#), Undated [Last accessed: 7 July 2021 with filters August 2019-July 2021 and DRC]

³⁰² UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 June 2021, paras. 12, 13 and 14

members of local communities, who often accused them of having links to ADF and of being “Rwandans who should return home”.

On 16 June 2020, the provincial government issued a decree creating a commission to localize, identify and count the “migrating population[s] called ‘Banyabwisha’ and ‘Bakonjo’” in Ituri and to assess their relationships with local communities [...]

During an August 2020 round table on peace in Komanda that brought together native communities, representatives of the provincial government and provincial deputies, the native communities called on the national and provincial authorities and UNHCR to “identify ... disarm and ... repatriate” the “Hutus-Rwandans calling themselves Banyabwisha” in Ituri [...]

On 8 September 2020, at least 10 Hutu/Banyabwisha men and women were killed in Payi Payi in Walese Vonkutu chefferie. A Nyali Tchabi chief, who had sold land to Hutu/Banyabwisha migrants, and his wife were also killed that day in neighbouring Belu village, in Banyali Tchabi chefferie

According to three Hutu/Banyabwisha internally displaced persons, including an eyewitness, international organizations and MONUSCO sources, before killing them, the assailants demanded from their Hutu/Banyabwisha victims the purchase contracts for the land they had bought in the area and destroyed these documents [...]

The eyewitness explained that she was asked for her Ituri land purchase contract, but that the assailants did not want those pertaining to Masisi territory. Several sources, including from the Nyali Tchabi and Hutu/Banyabwisha communities, explained that this attack also differed from earlier ADF attacks in south Ituri in terms of locations and modus operandi, which had included abductions and looting

Seven Hutu/Banyabwisha internally displaced persons explained that the attacks conducted between 8 and 11 July 2020 [...] had followed the same patterns as the one on 8 September. The Group could not confirm that information.

At least two violent incidents by Hutus/Banyawishas against Nyalis Tchabi followed the 8 September attack and part of a Hutu/Banyabwisha internally displaced persons camp was burned down, causing at least one death. A period of calm ensued, which was continuing at the time of drafting, but the level of mistrust and fear between communities has remained high, preventing populations from returning home or accessing their fields. Discussions between Nyalis Tchabi and Hutus/Banyabwishas were nascent at the time of drafting.³⁰³

6.3.2. Hema and Lendu Tribal Conflict

6.3.2.1. History

Human Rights Watch provided the following brief overview in June 2020:

The current violence [June 2020] stems from longstanding issues not addressed since the early 2000s, when tens of thousands of civilians died in countless massacres between 1999 and 2007. The control of land and natural resources between communities was a central issue then and today. Much of the bloodshed has its roots in competition over gold mines. Ituri’s mines have long been a cash cow for ex-rebels, politicians, and Congolese military officials who are involved in smuggling gold into neighboring countries.³⁰⁴

The International Crisis Group added in July 2020:

Since late 2017, armed groups, predominantly from the Lendu ethnic farming community, have committed deadly attacks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s Ituri province. Initial targets were members of the neighbouring Hema community, who are mostly herders, and the Congolese armed forces. But attacks are now increasingly indiscriminate [...]

³⁰³ UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 23 December 2020, paras. 60-66

³⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch, [Unrelenting Killings in Congo’s Ituri Province](#), 22 June 2020

The escalating violence has revived historical rivalries between the Hema and Lendu, who fought each other during the 1999-2003 war. The involvement of actors from the adjacent province of North Kivu, and even from neighbouring countries, could exacerbate the challenges faced by President Félix Tshisekedi.³⁰⁵

In January 2020, the UN released a report which stated that killings, rapes and other forms of violence targeting the Hema community in the province of Ituri may amount to crimes against humanity:

Killings, rapes and other forms of violence targeting the Hema community in the Democratic Republic of Congo province of Ituri may amount to crimes against humanity, a UN report released on Friday said. An investigation conducted by the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) in the DRC established that at least 701 people have been killed and 168 injured during inter-ethnic tensions between the Hema and Lendu communities, in the territories of Djugu and Mahagi, from December 2017 to September 2019. In addition, at least 142 people have been subjected to acts of sexual violence, the report said. Most of the victims are members of the Hema community. Since September 2018, Lendu armed groups have increasingly become more organized in carrying out attacks against the Hema and members of other ethnic groups such as the Alur, the investigators said. Among their objectives is to take control of the land of the Hema communities and their associated resources, they added. The report documents numerous cases of women being raped, of children – some in school uniforms – being killed, and of looting and burning of villages.³⁰⁶

The full report (in French), covering the period December 2017 to September 2019, can be viewed [here](#).³⁰⁷

A more detailed historical background is provided in section II. *Ituri: The Politics of a Tormented Province* in the June 2020 report by the International Crisis Group, [DR Congo: Ending the Cycle of Violence in Ituri](#), 15 July 2020.

6.3.2.2. Current Status of the Conflict

Reporting on developments in the DRC between September 2018 and September 2019, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

In January 2020, a United Nations report on inter-ethnic tensions in Ituri between September 2018 and September 2019 documented the killing of 393 persons and the rape of 101 women and girls, most of them from the Hema community, at the hand of armed assailants. The killing of 27 individuals and the rape of 41 women and girls by FARDC soldiers was also recorded.³⁰⁸

The Group of Experts on the DRC, as mandated by a UN Security Council resolution, reported in its report covering August to November 2019:

The Group found that, since 10 June 2019, multiple attacks had predominantly targeted the Hema population of Djugu territory, Ituri Province. The Group established that Lendu militias had carried out these attacks, although it remained obscure how many militias there were and

³⁰⁵ International Crisis Group, [DR Congo: Ending the Cycle of Violence in Ituri](#), 15 July 2020

³⁰⁶ OHCHR, [DRC: inter-ethnic violence in Ituri may constitute “crimes against humanity” – UN report](#), 10 January 2020

³⁰⁷ MONUSCO, [Rapport public sur les conflits en territoire de Djugu, province de l’Ituri Décembre 2017 à septembre 2019](#), January 2020

³⁰⁸ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2020, para. 26

how they were structured and organized. Some members of the Congolese security forces who have been deployed in Djugu territory to protect the population from these attacks also committed exactions against the population.³⁰⁹

The report further stated:

The Group has found that, since 10 June 2019, multiple attacks targeted predominantly the Hema population of Djugu Territory, Ituri Province. The Group established that Lendu militias were responsible for many of the attacks, although it remained obscure how many militias there were and how they were structured and organised. The killing, maiming, forced displacement, rape, abduction, destruction and looting committed during these attacks constitute sanctionable acts under paragraph 7 (e) of Security Council resolution 2293 (2016), as renewed by paragraph 2 of Council resolution 2478 (2019). In parallel, some members of the security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo deployed in Djugu Territory committed sanctionable acts that included rape, ill-treatment and destruction.³¹⁰

For specific events and violations during the reporting period August to November 2019 of the Group of Experts see UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 20 December 2019, *paras.* 78-92 and 93-100.

Reporting on events in 2020 Human Rights Watch stated: “[...] Some of the worst violence took place in Ituri, where ethnic Lendu-led militia have killed hundreds of mostly Hema villagers and forced hundreds of thousands out of their home”.³¹¹ Specifically reporting on violence in June 2020 the same source documented:

It was an overnight raid. Fighters believed to be from an ethnic Lendu-led militia stormed Loda, a village about 100 kilometers north of Bunia, the provincial capital of Ituri, on June 17. They killed 6 people, including at least 2 children, with gunfire and machetes. All the victims were ethnic Hema. About 40 houses were burned down. [...]

Militia attacks like the one in Loda have killed at least 444 civilians in Ituri since March [2020] and displaced more than 200,000 people since the beginning of the year, according to United Nations sources. Schools and health centers have been destroyed. Most killings follow the same pattern, with fighters from the Lendu community – split into rival factions and other groups – slaughtering ethnic Hema and Alur residents.

The violence has surged since a Congolese army military operation in March [2020] resulted in the death of Justin Ngudjolo, the leader of the Lendu-led Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO). The group has since split into different factions and continues to kill civilians across the province. Meanwhile, Congolese security forces fighting the militia have also committed serious abuses, including extrajudicial executions.

The current violence stems from longstanding issues not addressed since the early 2000s, when tens of thousands of civilians died in countless massacres between 1999 and 2007. The control of land and natural resources between communities was a central issue then and today. Much of the bloodshed has its roots in competition over gold mines. Ituri’s mines have long been a cash cow for ex-rebels, politicians, and Congolese military officials who are involved in smuggling gold into neighboring countries.

In January [2020], the UN’s human rights office in Congo said the killings, rapes, and other forms of violence targeting the Hema community may amount to crimes against humanity. On June 4 [2020], the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court also voiced concerns over

³⁰⁹ UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 20 December 2019, *Summary*

³¹⁰ UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 20 December 2019, *para.* 76

³¹¹ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2021](#) [Events of 2020], 2021

the “escalation in serious violence” in Ituri, calling on the Congolese authorities to properly investigate the alleged crimes.³¹²

Similarly, Amnesty International reported that:

[...] Between March and June [2020], ethnically motivated attacks by militias resulted in around 444 civilian deaths in Ituri and the displacement of more than 200,000 people. Most killings were carried out by fighters from the Lendu community, and the majority of victims were ethnic Hema and Alur residents. There were reports of inter-communal clashes in May and June [2020] between Alur and Hema communities in Ituri [...]³¹³

The International Crisis Group added in July 2020:

Since December 2017, violence in the province of Ituri, in the north east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), has left nearly 1,000 people dead and half a million displaced. Breaking out in the territory of Djugu, small-scale attacks first pitted the two main communities in Ituri, the Hema and Lendu, against each other. Subsequently, Lendu militias targeted the Hema, and then the national army, before attacking nearby territories. External actors, including from North Kivu province and bordering countries, are also involved. [...] The current crisis differs from the 1999-2003 conflict in Ituri, during which Hema and Lendu communities participated in massacres undertaken by associated militias. Today, most assailants are recruited from within the Lendu community and brought together in an association of militias, the Cooperative for the Development of the Congo. In contrast to the previous conflict, Lendu leaders have distanced themselves from these militias. Still, given the limits of the government’s military response, the possibility of escalating ethnic violence cannot be dismissed. Lendu militias continue to expand. Thus far, the Hema have not mounted systematic reprisals, but they do not rule out mobilising their youth if attacks continue. Young Hema have organised into self-defence groups and erected roadblocks in Ituri, which should be seen as forewarning of the risk of ethnic confrontation.³¹⁴

6.4. Major flashpoints in other geographical areas impacting on the security situation of Eastern DRC

In September 2019, the Africa Center for Strategic Studies reported:

[...] Bushwira in Kabare territory, which is close to Bukavu, is a generally calm area that has experienced hardly any conflict. Kanyola in Walungu territory is a post-conflict area. Sange is a city on the main road from Bukavu to Uvira. It has been affected by the conflict in Burundi and both Burundian rebels and its government troops are regularly active in the area. Congolese armed groups are also still active there. Kipupu, situated on the Hauts Plateaux in Mwenga territory, is a contested area. The state is present but armed groups operate close by. In all four localities, the international presence in the form of MONUSCO or international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) is very limited, as is the presence of local civil society. [...] It was clear from the vast majority of the interviews that ethnic affiliation remains the predominant element of people’s worldview. This issue is regularly connected to livelihood issues, such as the coexistence of pastoralist and farming communities, and requires the judicial and administrative authorities to manage the inevitable conflict. The tensest relationship is that between the Banyamulenge community and others.⁴⁷

³¹² Human Rights Watch, [Unrelenting Killings in Congo’s Ituri Province](#), 22 June 2020

³¹³ Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Report 2020/21, The State of the World’s Human Rights](#), 7 April 2021

³¹⁴ International Crisis Group, [DR Congo: Ending the Cycle of Violence in Ituri](#), 15 July 2020

⁴⁷ Several interviewees insisted on calling the Banyamulenge 'Banyarwanda', as the term Banyamulenge links the community to an area in South Kivu that the Banyamulenge claim as their chiefdom. The conflict between Banyamulenge and other communities has deep roots in provincial history and is an important driver of conflict. Throughout the wars of recent decades, the aspirations of the Banyamulenge have been manipulated by various sides such as Rwanda and the DRC Government in Kinshasa.³¹⁵

The Kivu Security Tracker reported that there had been an uptick in regional involvement in the eastern Congo in recent years:

[...] in particular in hotspots such as the Hauts Plateaux of South Kivu, where Burundi and Rwanda continue to wage some of their power struggles – both internal to each country and between each other. Here, as in North Kivu, where Rwanda has intervened more forcefully to target Rwandan rebels since President Felix Tshisekedi came to power in January 2019, these regional dynamics compound local conflicts over land and resources – mixed with political and customary power struggles.³¹⁶

Covering the period 1 September 2019 to 15 March 2020 a UN Secretary-General report stated with regards to cross-border incidents:

Isolated cross-border security incidents occurred elsewhere in the region during the period under review. On 5 October [2019], suspected members of the FDLR splinter group Rassemblement pour l'unité et la démocratie (RUD-Urunana), reportedly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, carried out an attack in Musanze district in Rwanda, near the Volcanoes National Park, in which 14 people were killed. Rwanda stated that its defence forces had repelled the attackers, killing 19 of them and capturing 5. On 9 November [2019], the commander of RUD-Urunana, General Juvenal Musabimana, also known as Jean-Michel Africa, died during a FARDC operation in Binza, Rutshuru territory, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.³¹⁷

Covering the period 16 March to 15 September 2020 a follow-up UN Secretary-General report stated with regards to cross-border operations:

On 14 April [2020], the vice-president and spokesperson of the civil society coalition of North Kivu Province raised concern over the alleged presence of RDF troops near the provincial capital, Goma. The Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda both rejected the report. In the same vein, on 16 April [2020], civil society groups in South Kivu Province alleged movements by elements of the Burundian army south of Uvira town, followed subsequently by media reports alleging that the Burundian troops had retreated to Burundi [...]

Incidents involving South Sudanese troops were reported in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. In Ituri Province, members of the South Sudanese army were accused by the Congolese authorities of looting and burning houses between April and June [2020]. A bilateral meeting between the concerned security services after the incident resulted in the release of a Congolese hostage and the return of looted goods by the South Sudanese authorities. [...]

On 9 April [2020], UPDF exchanged fire with soldiers of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) on Lake Albert after the latter had allegedly entered Ugandan territory. Two FARDC soldiers were reportedly killed while two others were injured and

³¹⁵ Africa Center for Strategic Studies, [*Securing Legitimate Stability in the DRC: External Assumptions and Local Perspectives*](#), 30 September 2019

³¹⁶ Kivu Security Tracker, [*The Landscape of Armed Groups in Eastern Congo: Missed Opportunities, Protracted Insecurity and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies*](#), 28 February 2021

³¹⁷ UN Security Council, [*Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region*](#), 3 April 2020, para. 6

arrested. Following the incident, Congolese and Ugandan officials met and resolved the issue.³¹⁸

The International Crisis Group reported in July 2020 about the conflict in Ituri:

Rwanda and Uganda both have historical ties to armed groups and rebellions in Ituri and North Kivu. Rwanda, which borders North Kivu, has had greater involvement there, while Uganda has played a bigger role in Ituri. Several Congolese actors who were active in previous Congo wars are involved in the conflict in Ituri and operate from Uganda.

Among these different actors, former members of the Congolese Rally for Democracy-Kisangani/Liberation Movement (Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie-Kisangani/Mouvement de Libération, or RCD-K/ML) play a leading role. During the 1998-2003 war, this predominantly Nande group, led by former rebel leader Mbusa Nyamwisi and supported by Uganda, controlled parts of North Kivu and Ituri. Some of its members are still based in Uganda, in plain view of the authorities, and maintain contact with armed groups active in North Kivu and Ituri. Tshisekedi's election and the return of Nyamwisi to the DRC after years of exile in Uganda have improved relations with Kinshasa, but some former RCD-K/ML rebels nevertheless express their disappointment with the new government. Opponents of Kabila, these former rebels believe that the former president's clan still dominates the power structure. Nyamwisi left the country once again when he realised, contrary to what he had hoped, that he would not obtain a position in the Tshisekedi government.

According to Congolese security services and representatives of armed groups based in Uganda, some members of the former M23 rebel movement established in Uganda are also involved in the Ituri attacks. In December 2017, when that violence flared up, armed elements – identified by Congolese authorities as ex-M23 members – allegedly infiltrated Walendu-Bindi (Irumu territory in Ituri) from the Kamango region in North Kivu via Tchabi, on the border of the two provinces. The movement of former M23 members across the Ugandan border into Aru and Djugu territories in Ituri in 2018 was confirmed by Congolese security officials, who also apprehended certain ex-M23 members as they infiltrated the Berunda forest in Ituri. The interrogations reportedly confirmed the existence of a recruitment network for former M23 members in Uganda.

At the same time, Rwandan intelligence services have accused Uganda of stoking violence in Ituri as part of a larger destabilisation plan that would affect North Kivu and ultimately Rwanda's security. Kampala has always denied these allegations, while it accuses Kigali of supporting the ADF in North Kivu, an accusation which Rwanda also rejects. While it is difficult at this stage to determine the scale of recruitment and exfiltration operations of former rebels toward Ituri, at the local level, certain political leaders and members of civil society remain convinced that links exist between the violence in Ituri and the involvement of external actors.³¹⁹

Already in its earlier report of January 2020 the International Crisis Group stated:

Intensifying hostility among states in the Great Lakes threatens a return to the regional wars that tore that region apart in previous decades. Rwanda's president, Paul Kagame, accuses Burundi and Uganda of backing Rwandan rebels active in the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) North and South Kivu provinces and threatens to retaliate for those groups' attacks on his country. In turn, Burundi and Uganda assert that Rwanda supports Burundian and Ugandan rebels in the DRC. At the same time, the DRC's new president, Félix Tshisekedi, has floated plans to invite Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda to conduct joint military operations with DRC

³¹⁸ UN Security Council, [Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region](#), 29 September 2020, paras. 8, 10 and 11

³¹⁹ International Crisis Group, [DR Congo: Ending the Cycle of Violence in Ituri](#), 15 July 2020

troops against insurgents sheltering in his country, a risky policy that could fuel proxy conflicts.³²⁰

Covering the period 16 September 2020 to 15 March 2021 a UN Secretary-General report stated:

In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, foreign and local armed groups remained active, with a surge in attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in North Kivu province, mainly in Rwenzori Sector, east of Beni town and near the border with Uganda. Between 16 September [2020] and 15 March [2021], attacks carried out by alleged ADF elements resulted in the killing of over 400 civilians. Efforts to prosecute suspects in attacks against civilians were partly undermined by the escape of 1,335 inmates, including ADF members, during an attack on Kangwayi Prison in Beni by suspected ADF elements on 20 October [2020]. While military operations conducted by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) in 2019 dispersed ADF fighters and dislodged them from their traditional stronghold in Mbau, Kamango and Eringeti, the group remains a significant threat [...]

FARDC continued its operations against Rwandan armed groups operating in Congolese territory. On 23 and 24 October [2020], FARDC clashed with the Rwandan armed group Conseil national de la résistance pour la Démocratie and its Mai-Mai allies, killing 27 combatants and capturing arms and ammunition. Meanwhile, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) were reportedly able to consolidate their recruitment and training activities, with reports of military training for new recruits taking place in southern Lubero and Rutshuru territories. Illicit economic activities by various armed groups also remained a key driving factor of conflict. [...]

In South Kivu, FARDC operations against the Burundian armed groups Forces nationales de libération (FNL) and RED-Tabara resulted in the killing of at least 27 FNL fighters in Homba, in the Fizi, and Uvira territories, between 23 and 26 October [2020]. From 22 to 24 November [2020], FARDC reportedly seized the FNL headquarters in South Kivu. Several elements of the RED-Tabara were reported to have relocated from their original strongholds in Fizi and Uvira to Kalehe territory [...]

In response to the midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo released on 23 December (S/2020/1283), which alleged incursions by Rwanda Defence Force into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Government of Rwanda issued a press release on 8 January, denying joint operations with FARDC and stating that military cooperation between the two countries was currently limited to the sharing of intelligence on armed groups [...]

During the reporting period attacks were also perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 19 October, 27 November and 20 December [2020], which resulted in killings and abductions of civilians. Lord's Resistance Army combatants also abducted 13 civilians near Obo, Haut-Mbomou Prefecture, in the Central African Republic, on 28 September [2020].³²¹

7. Human Rights Situation – Civil and Political Rights

Human rights violations that occur as part of the ongoing conflict in the Kivus and Ituri and are committed by non-state armed groups have been integrated in section sections [6. Overview of the Security Situation, including conflict-related human rights violations](#). For conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence and child recruitment see [section 8](#) and [section 9](#) of this report respectively.

³²⁰ International Crisis Group, [Averting Proxy Wars in the Eastern DR Congo and Great Lakes](#), 23 January 2020

³²¹ UN Security Council, [Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region](#), 30 March 2021, paras. 8-12

The UN Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC (UNJHRO) issued a 2019, 2020 and March 2021 infographic depicting the 'Human rights violations documented in provinces affected by conflict', including the two Kivus and Ituri, as well as 'reported violations per alleged perpetrator' (state agents versus armed groups), specifically highlighting 'documented violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms linked to restrictions to democratic space' (i.e. Right to liberty and security; Right to property; Freedom of opinion/expression; Right to life; Freedom of peaceful assembly; Right to physical integrity; Freedom of association). These can be found here:

2019: OHCHR-MONUSCO (UNJHRO), [*Violations des droits de l'homme documentées dans les provinces affectées par les conflits*](#), 22 January 2020 [French only]

2020: OHCHR-MONUSCO (UNJHRO), [*Human rights violations documented in provinces affected by conflict*](#), 25 January 2021

March 2021: OHCHR-MONUSCO (UNJHRO), [*Protection of civilians: Human rights violations documented in provinces affected by conflict*](#), 22 April 2021

General situation in the conflict areas of Eastern DRC

The human rights situation described in this section relates specifically to reported state abuses committed in the Kivus and Ituri. It is meant as indicative of the situation on the ground as found amongst the sources consulted for this report and thus provides a broad overview of human rights abuses committed in the Eastern region.

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 29 June and 25 September 2019:

The number of human rights violations during the second quarter of 2019 dropped by 5 per cent compared with the first quarter, with MONUSCO documenting 1,479 cases. State agents, mainly FARDC soldiers and the Congolese National Police, were responsible for nearly 56 per cent of the violations. The remaining 44 per cent were committed by armed groups. The human rights situation remained most worrying in conflict-affected provinces, where over 85 per cent of all violations took place, particularly North Kivu, South Kivu, the Kasais and Tanganyika. At least 286 civilians, including 66 women, were victims of extrajudicial or summary killings. [...]

The number of violations of civil and political rights and fundamental freedoms decreased further in the second quarter of 2019, to nearly half the number documented during the first quarter. Where violations occurred, they were predominantly committed by State agents, mainly the Congolese National Police. Obstacles to freedom of the press and attacks and threats against human rights defenders and other civil society actors continued to be observed. In some cases, armed groups targeted journalists and civil society members who had reported human rights abuses or supported the work of Ebola response teams. While several peaceful demonstrations were held without incident, others were suppressed by the authorities, including through lethal force.³²²

In November 2019 the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

Between July and September [2019], MONUSCO documented 1,441 human rights violations and abuses across the country, a number that is similar to that documented in the previous

³²² UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 27 September 2019, paras. 54 and 55

three months. Around half of the recorded cases were committed by State agents, the other half by members of armed groups and militias. FARDC soldiers were responsible for 26 per cent of all violations recorded. The human rights situation remains particularly worrying in provinces affected by conflict, where the activities of armed groups, as well as the military operations against them, continued to have a significant negative impact on civilians. At least 301 civilians, including 69 women, were victims of extrajudicial or summary killings. A total of 156 women and 46 girls became victims of sexual violence between July and September in these provinces. A worrying spike in violations, including in the form of sexual violence committed by armed groups, was observed in the Minembwe area in South Kivu.³²³

The U.S. Department of State's annual report on human rights, covering 2020, reported that "Civilian authorities did not always maintain control over the security forces. Members of the security forces committed numerous abuses".³²⁴ The same source further states:

Government security forces, as well as illegal armed groups, continued to commit abuses, primarily in the restive eastern provinces and the Kasai region. These abuses included unlawful killings, disappearances, torture, destruction of government and private property, and sexual and gender-based violence. Illegal armed groups also recruited, abducted, and retained child soldiers and forced labor.³²⁵

Specifically the report highlighted arbitrary or unlawful killings as a human rights issue:

The state security forces (SSF) committed arbitrary or unlawful killings in operations against illegal armed groups (IAGs) in the east and in the Kasai region (see section 1.g.). According to the UN Joint Office of Human Rights (UNJHRO), security forces were responsible for at least 225 extrajudicial killings across the country as of June 30. Many of these extrajudicial killings occurred in the North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri Provinces, where the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) fought the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and other militias, including ethnic militias in the Djugu Territory of Ituri.³²⁶

Also referring to human rights violations throughout 2020 as documented and confirmed by the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO), its analysis for the year found:

In 2020, the UNJHRO documented 7,909 human rights violations and abuses throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which represents an average of 659 human rights violations per month. This is a significant increase (+21%) compared to 2019 and a reversal of the trend of the previous year, which recorded a decrease of 4%. The figures recorded are higher than those documented during the election year (6,814 violations and abuses in 2018). This increase reflects a deterioration of the security situation in the provinces affected by armed conflict, in particular North Kivu, Ituri and South Kivu where the UNJHRO recorded a sharp increase of about 46% of the number of abuses committed by armed groups.³²⁷

The same report further specified:

³²³ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 26 November 2019, para. 39

³²⁴ U.S. Department of State, [*2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 30 March 2021, *Executive Summary*

³²⁵ U.S. Department of State, [*2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 30 March 2021, *Executive Summary*

³²⁶ U.S. Department of State, [*2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 1. A, Motivated killings*

³²⁷ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UNJHRO), [*Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020*](#), 31 May 2021, para. 2

The most reported type of violations documented by UNJHRO in 2020 were violations of the right to physical integrity with 2,094 violations and 4,098 victims, including 1,162 women and 523 children, a slightly higher figure than that documented in 2019. Among these victims, at least 679 women, 285 children and three men were victims of sexual violence across the country. Violations of the right to property increased by 30% with 1,911 violations. Violations of the right to liberty and security of person (1,814 violations with 6,128 victims, including 950 women and 450 children) increased by 17% compared to 2019. There was a 14% increase in violations of the right to life with 1,665 violations and 3,684 victims, including 2,945 victims of extrajudicial and summary killings, including 553 women and 286 children. Finally, cases of forced labour increased by 43% with 80 violations and 648 victims [...]

The number of victims of extrajudicial killings by State agents remains of concern. Despite a significant decrease in 2018 (-67%), this trend was not maintained, and an increase was documented in 2019 (+11%). In 2020, the number of victims of extrajudicial killings (458 victims including 61 women and 35 children) increased compared to 2019 (430 victims including 81 women and 42 children). The most affected provinces in 2020 are North Kivu (148 victims), South Kivu (64 victims), Kinshasa and Ituri (50 victims each).³²⁸

The report further highlighted:

This proportion is nearly the opposite to that recorded the previous year (54% by State agents, 46% by armed groups). In contrast, the number of violations committed by State agents remained stable. In particular, the number of violations by soldiers of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and agents of the Police nationale congolaise (PNC) did not vary greatly, except for a slight decrease (-5%) concerning FARDC soldiers and a slight increase concerning PNC agents (+3%). However, agents of the Agence nationale de renseignements (ANR) were responsible for a growing number of violations (+87%), whereas the number of violations committed by other State agents decreased (-9%).

Throughout the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, State agents were responsible for 45% of the human rights violations documented in 2020, whereas 55% were perpetrated by armed groups.³²⁹

The report specifically mentioned with regards to human rights violations committed by FARDC soldiers and PNC agents:

Among State agents, FARDC soldiers were responsible for the highest number of violations (22%). Most of these violations were documented in conflict-affected areas (92%), mainly in North-Kivu (39%), South Kivu (13%), Tanganyika (12%) and Ituri (8%). FARDC soldiers were mainly responsible for 295 violations of the right to life (449 victims, including 295 victims of extrajudicial killings of which 48 women and 24 children), 565 violations of the right to physical integrity (1,029 victims, including 140 women and 86 children victims of sexual violence), 321 violations of the right to liberty and security of person (969 victims, including 130 women and 98 children) and 450 violations of the right to property. [...]

In 2020, PNC agents were responsible for 17% of the total number of violations, in particular in the provinces of North-Kivu (24%), Kasai (17%), Kasai-Central (12%), South-Kivu and Haut-Katanga (9% each). PNC agents committed more violations in conflict-affected provinces (80%) than in nonaffected provinces¹⁴ (20%). PNC agents were mainly responsible for 161 violations of the right to life (231 victims including 149 victims of extrajudicial killings including 13 women and eight children), 355 violations of the right to physical integrity (712 victims, including 34 women and 42 children victims of sexual violence), 449 violations of the right to liberty and

³²⁸ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, paras. 6, 7, and 8

³²⁹ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, para. 10

security of person (1,404 victims, including 133 women and 79 children) and 232 violations of the right to property.³³⁰

For a further break-down of these violations see the report by the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, *paras. 18-21*.

Covering the period 1 September 2019 to 15 March 2020 a UN Secretary-General report stated with regards to the human rights situation in the DRC and particularly in the eastern region:

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, violations of political rights and freedoms decreased compared to the previous reporting period as a result of the Government's efforts to open the political space and address human rights abuses and impunity, including by establishing transitional justice mechanisms. However, human rights violations, including killings, abductions and sexual and gender-based violence, continued to be reported in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, within the context of FARDC operations against armed groups, inter-ethnic fighting and attacks on the civilian population by various armed groups. In a related development, on 7 November, the International Criminal Court sentenced Bosco Ntaganda, the former deputy Chief of Staff and commander of operations of Union des patriotes congolais/Forces patriotiques pour la libération du Congo, to 30 years in prison for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ituri province in 2002 and 2003.³³¹

Reporting on human rights developments in the DRC between 26 November 2019 and 16 March 2020, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

In 2019, MONUSCO documented 6,545 human rights violations and abuses across the country, a decrease of four per cent compared with 2018 and a reversal of the upward trend of the previous two years. The decrease was mainly a result of a significant reduction in violations linked to restrictions on democratic space. The number of violations attributable to State agents decreased by 15 per cent, while abuses by armed groups and militias increased by 14 per cent, in particular in Maniema, North Kivu and South Kivu. Extrajudicial killings and summary executions increased to 1,459 cases, including those of 324 women and 114 children. Armed groups were responsible for the majority of the killings.³³²

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 17 March and 16 June 2020:

In the first quarter of 2020, MONUSCO documented and verified 1,973 human rights violations and abuses across the country. While violations committed by State agents decreased, those attributed to armed groups and militias increased markedly. Of greatest concern was the spike in extrajudicial or summary killings, with at least 730 civilians, including 148 women, killed during the first quarter of 2020, of whom 657 were killed by armed groups. At least 254 women and 67 children were victims of conflict-related sexual violence, including 250 by armed groups, in particular FDLR, and 71 by State agents, in particular FARDC. The vast majority of these incidents were documented in North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces [...]. Several human rights violations by State agents were documented in the context of COVID-19 preventive measures, including those put in place under the state of emergency. These

³³⁰ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, *paras. 11 and 12*

³³¹ UN Security Council, [Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region](#), 3 April 2020, *para. 25*

³³² UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2020, *para. 24*

included the extrajudicial killing of four individuals, violations of the right to physical integrity of 79 people, including 3 women, the arbitrary arrest and illegal detention of 64 people, including 12 women, and 20 violations of the right to property.³³³

Describing the human rights situation between 17 June and 18 September 2020, the UN Secretary-General noted in his report that:

There were 2,140 documented human rights violations and abuses across the country in the second quarter of 2020, an 8 per cent increase from the previous quarter. State agents were responsible for nearly 44 per cent of those violations. Armed groups in the conflict-affected eastern provinces, most notably those based in Djugu, committed the remainder of the violations.³³⁴

The same report further noted:

The increase in the overall number of documented human rights violations is also due to sustained attacks against civilians by armed assailants, mainly in the Djugu, Irumu and Mahagi territories of Ituri Province, where at least 323 civilians were killed (including 64 women and 87 children), 156 wounded (including 58 women and 33 children) and 127 abducted (including 30 women and 18 children), and 53 women and girls were subjected to sexual violence between April and June 2020. Human rights violations by national security forces in those territories also increased, resulting in the extrajudicial killing of 11 civilians, including five women and two children. Although North Kivu saw a decrease of 13 per cent in human rights violations, it is still the province with the highest number of documented violations. South Kivu and Tanganyika registered an increase in such violations of 28 and 12 per cent, respectively, in the second quarter of 2020.³³⁵

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 19 September and 1 December 2020:

Between July and October [2020], 2,747 human rights violations and abuses were documented throughout the country, a small decrease compared with the previous four months (March to June). State agents, in particular FARDC soldiers, were responsible for 48 per cent of those violations, whereas 52 per cent were committed by armed groups, with Nyatura, ADF and FDLR combatants as the main perpetrators. Some 12 per cent of the violations were related to restrictions on democratic space, which represents a decrease from the previous four months [...]. Approximately half of all the violations documented between July and October occurred in North Kivu, in which at least 407 civilians (308 men, 72 women and 27 children) were killed and 237 wounded (188 men, 37 women and 12 children) during attacks against civilians and clashes between armed groups. In South Kivu, the intercommunal conflict in the Hauts Plateaux resulted in at least 35 civilians (26 men, 8 women and 1 child) killed and the widespread destruction of villages and livelihoods. At least 308 civilians were killed by armed groups in Ituri [...]. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, between July and October, 27 human rights violations were documented in relation to the enforcement of prevention measures, of which 18 were committed by agents of the Congolese National Police (PNC). Those violations included the

³³³ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 June 2020, paras. 20 and 21

³³⁴ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 September 2020, para. 21

³³⁵ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 September 2020, para. 23

extrajudicial killing of 2 men, the ill-treatment of 42 people (34 men, 5 women and 3 children) and the arbitrary arrest and illegal detention of 16 people (13 men and 3 women).³³⁶

Covering the period 16 September 2020 to 15 March 2021 a UN Secretary-General report stated:

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) reported that, between September and December [2020], 51 per cent of all documented violations were committed by armed groups and other non-State actors, with Nyatura, ADF, FDLR and Djugu-based armed assailants as the main perpetrators. State agents, including FARDC soldiers, were responsible for the remaining 49 per cent of the violations. Conflict-affected provinces, particularly North Kivu, were the most impacted.³³⁷

Reporting on the human rights situation between 2 December 2020 and 18 March 2021, the UN Secretary-General report stated that

In December 2020 and January 2021, MONUSCO documented 1,111 human rights violations and abuses, an increase of 2 per cent compared with the previous period, mainly owing to an increase in violations committed by the Congolese National Police in North Kivu during the enforcement of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Armed groups perpetrated 51 per cent of the violations, while State agents were responsible for 49 per cent of them. More than 90 per cent of these violations were committed in conflict-affected provinces, in particular in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. At least 350 people were victims of extrajudicial and summary killings, including 76 women and 28 children, which is down from the figure of 415 recorded over the previous two months. Violations related to democratic space decreased by 58 per cent, with fewer documented cases of threats, intimidation and arbitrary arrests for the exercise of fundamental freedoms.³³⁸

The same source further highlighted:

In January [2021], as part of its advocacy for the protection of civilians and human rights, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo issued two public reports highlighting the upward trend in human rights violations and abuses committed in Ituri and North Kivu by armed groups, as well as by members of the national security and defence forces. The Congolese authorities continued internal investigations into the violations documented by the Office, which had allegedly been perpetrated by State agents.³³⁹

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 19 March and 18 June 2021, the human rights situation was described as follows:

Between March and April [2021], MONUSCO documented 1,084 human rights violations and abuses, which is a 5 per cent decrease compared with the previous reporting period. More than 90 per cent of the documented violations were committed in conflict-affected provinces. Most were documented in Masisi, Beni and Rutshuru territories of North Kivu; Irumu, Djugu and Mambasa territories of Ituri; and Uvira, Fizi and Shabunda territories of South Kivu.

³³⁶ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 November 2020, paras. 21-23

³³⁷ UN Security Council, [Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region](#), 30 March 2021, para. 29

³³⁸ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 25

³³⁹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 26

Armed groups, especially Nyatura, ADF and FDLR, perpetrated 54 per cent of the violations. These included a high number of abductions and other violations of the right to liberty and security of person, involving 445 victims (368 men, 55 women and 22 children), as well as violations of the right to physical integrity, involving 302 victims (192 men, 97 women and 13 children). State agents were responsible for 46 per cent of the violations, particularly of the right to liberty and security of person, involving 398 victims (334 men, 36 women and 28 children), and the right to physical integrity, involving 300 victims (154 men, 103 women and 43 children). At least 394 people, including 84 women and 37 children, were victims of extrajudicial and summary killings, which is similar to the previous reporting period. Violations related to democratic space increased by 19 per cent, owing to a rise in violations of the right to physical integrity and freedom of peaceful assembly.³⁴⁰

Situation and treatment in detention and prisons

The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) noted on its country-page on the DRC that following their advocacy and recommendations to the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) during its April 2019 session, “the newly elected authorities decided the closure of all secret detention centres across the country”.³⁴¹

According to the UN Secretary-General’s report covering major events and developments between 29 June and 25 September 2019:

In the second quarter of 2019, at least 32 people died in detention, mainly due to lack of access to appropriate medical care or malnutrition. At least 146 people escaped from detention centres across the country, with Kwango, Maniema and North Kivu Provinces being the most affected. Both figures represent a decrease from those recorded in the previous quarter.³⁴²

In November 2019 the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

At least 26 people died in detention between July and September [2019, mainly due to a lack of access to appropriate medical care, malnutrition and, in some cases, ill-treatment. At least 64 people escaped from detention centres across the country. Both figures represent a decrease compared with the previous quarter but show that it remains necessary to reform the corrections system.³⁴³

Reporting on developments in the DRC between 26 November 2019 and 16 March 2020, the UN Secretary-General provided the following overview:

The situation in Congolese prisons remained alarming. In 2019, at least 1,131 persons escaped from detention centres across the country and 149 persons died in detention, owing mainly to overcrowding, insufficient access to health care, malnutrition and ill-treatment.³⁴⁴

³⁴⁰ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 June 2021, para. 28

³⁴¹ World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), [Democratic Republic of the Congo: At a glance](#), Undated [Last accessed: 27 May 2021]

³⁴² UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 27 September 2019, para. 56

³⁴³ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 26 November 2019, para. 40

³⁴⁴ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2020, para. 44

The U.S. Department of State's annual report on human rights reported that during a 30-day period in January 2020, "69 prisoners in Bukavu, South Kivu Province, and 44 in Goma, North Kivu Province, starving to death between October 2019 and February".³⁴⁵ The same report noted that "In Bunia, Ituri Province, 1,144 prisoners were held in a former pigsty".³⁴⁶ In September 2020 MONUSCO reported that between "mid-August and September 10, 2020, seven detainees were reported starving to death at Bunia central prison, in the Ituri province. Between January and September 10, 2020, altogether 52 inmates died of malnutrition in this prison".³⁴⁷

In October 2020 "at least 1300 inmates" held at the Kangbaya central prison and military base of the Congolese army in Beni, North Kivu, were freed by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), likely to have been actual members of the ADF, local militias and general criminals.³⁴⁸

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 19 September and 1 December 2020:

Between July and October, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office documented 76 deaths in custody (74 men, 1 woman and 1 child), caused mainly by the conditions of detention, in particular the lack of food and access to appropriate health care. In addition to the Beni mass prison escape, the lack of security in prisons was illustrated by the mutiny in the prison of Lubumbashi between 25 and 28 September, during which at least 4 prisoners escaped, 3 were shot dead and 18 wounded by security and defence forces. Some 50 women detainees were also rounded up in a courtyard and at least 21 of them were gang raped.³⁴⁹

The UN Secretary-General report of March 2021 noted the existence of "prolonged detention and prison overcrowding in Mahagi and Aru territories" and reported that "Given the persistent threat of attacks on the Kangbaya prison in Beni, North Kivu, MONUSCO provided logistical support to the military and justice authorities for the transfer to Ndolo Prison in Kinshasa on 11 December [2020] of six detainees considered the most dangerous among the suspected ADF fighters currently in detention".³⁵⁰

7.1. North Kivu

Human rights violations that occur as part of the ongoing conflict in the Kivus and Ituri and are committed by non-state armed groups have been integrated in section sections [6. Overview of the Security Situation, including conflict-related human rights violations](#). For conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence and child recruitment see [section 8](#) and [section 9](#) of this report respectively.

³⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 1. A, Prison and detention center conditions*

³⁴⁶ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 1. A, Prison and detention center conditions*

³⁴⁷ United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), Ituri, [MONUSCO intervenes to address starvation concerns at Bunia Central Prison](#), 14 September 2020

³⁴⁸ Long War Journal, [Islamic State claims prison break in the DRC](#), 20 October 2020

³⁴⁹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 November 2020, *para. 24*

³⁵⁰ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, *paras. 48 and 49*

The human rights situation described in this section relates specifically to reported state abuses committed in North Kivu. It is meant as indicative of the situation on the ground as found amongst the sources consulted for this report and thus provides a broad overview of human rights abuses committed in that province.

Arbitrary and unlawful killings

In November 2019 The Guardian reported:

On Wednesday, AFP reported that six people have been killed in protests so far this week. The bodies of four young protesters were found near the UN base in Beni after an attack on Monday in response to the killing of eight civilians. Six Congolese soldiers were wounded by gunfire, the Associated Press said.

“Our demonstration is patriotic,” one of the demonstrators in Wednesday’s protest, law student Fiston Muhindo, told AFP. “Monusco is standing on the sidelines as the massacres unfold, when its chief mission is to protect civilians.”

Dozens of protesters, many of them young, invaded one of two UN peacekeeper camps in Beni on Monday, tearing down a wall despite shots fired by the Congolese security forces in an effort to disperse the crowd. Some demonstrators demanded that the UN mission act or leave, and UN staff were evacuated to another base, near the airport. In Goma, police used teargas to break up a demonstration outside the university [...].³⁵¹

The U.S. Department of State’s annual report on human rights reported that “the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) released a report covering violence in North Kivu and Ituri Provinces between January 1, 2019, and January 31, 2020, related to the ADF and FARDC’s campaign against that group. The report identified abuses committed by SSF during the campaign against ADF, especially following a large-scale deployment in October 2019. The report described eight summary executions by the FARDC and the arbitrary arrests of 91 persons, including at least four children”.³⁵²

The same report included evidence from MONUSCO which reported that:

on January 6, NDC-R combatants killed two women, wounded one man and another woman with machetes, and abducted two other men, in Masisi territory of North Kivu. The attack was reportedly an act of revenge against the civilian population whom the NDC-R combatants accused of facilitating the arrest of one of their group.³⁵³

The U.S. Department of State’s annual report on human rights reported that in May 2020:

a PNC officer shot and killed a protester in Beni, North Kivu Province. The victim, Freddy Kambale, a member of the youth activist group “Fight for Change” (LUCHA), was protesting continued insecurity in the region. Police responding to the protest initially stated the march was in violation of national COVID-19-related state of emergency provisions, which prohibited any gatherings larger than 20. Local observers testified that only 20 persons were present at the protest. On July 13, a military court found the police officer in question guilty of murder and sentenced him to life in prison.³⁵⁴

³⁵¹ The Guardian, [Ebola staff in Congo on lockdown after angry residents storm UN camp](#), 27 November 2019

³⁵² U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 1. G, Abuses in internal conflict*

³⁵³ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 1. G, Abuses in internal conflict*

³⁵⁴ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 1. A, Motivated killings*

Also in May 2020, “The United Nations reported that on May 7, during operations against IAGs in the Rutshuru territory of North Kivu, a FARDC soldier in the 3416 regiment killed a three-year-old girl and injured one man and two women during an eviction. The soldier was arrested and detained by the military prosecutor, who subsequently opened an investigation into the killing”.³⁵⁵

Arbitrary arrests and threats against government critics and opponents, including peaceful protesters

According to the UN Secretary-General’s report covering major events and developments between 29 June and 25 September 2019:

Civil society organizations in the region organized a series of demonstrations urging local and national authorities, as well as MONUSCO and the international community, to address insecurity in Beni territory. Several civilians were injured, and the police arrested dozens in the context of these demonstrations.³⁵⁶

The U.S. Department of State’s annual report on human rights reported that in 2020, “the UNJHRO reported that on April 4 [2020], PNC officers arbitrarily arrested a woman and her daughter in Nyaragongo, North Kivu Province, under the pretext that the provincial governor’s public health orders allowed police to arrest anyone caught chatting in the streets. The two women were forced to give police a bribe in order to be released”.³⁵⁷

Human Rights Watch reported in its 2020 annual report:

[...] There has been a significant decline in political repression since Tshisekedi came to power. Many political prisoners and activists detained in previous years were freed, while activists and politicians in exile were allowed to return. However, some peaceful demonstrators continued to be arbitrarily detained or beaten by security forces. On June 30, Congo’s independence day, police fired live ammunition, killing one person, during opposition protests in Goma against corruption and election fraud. [...]³⁵⁸

In June 2020, Human Rights Watch reports on cases of abuse and/or repression in the North Kivu Province:

[...] Jimmy Nzaly, a lawyer and national coordinator of the group Génération Positive-RDC, was detained in a cell at the prosecutor’s office in Goma on May 27 [2020], following a complaint by Patrick Munyomo, a member of parliament, who accused him of contempt and defamation. Nzaly was transferred to Goma’s central prison, then released on bail on June 13 [2020]. Espoir Miganda Mugisho, an activist in Goma’s Mugunga district, was arrested on June 2 and accused of “contempt for authority” and the murder of two police officers, after he denounced alleged criminality by police officers. He told Human Rights Watch that police officers beat him in jail and that the authorities denied him family visits and access to a lawyer. He was transferred to Goma’s central prison, then released on bail on June 22 [2020].³⁵⁹

³⁵⁵ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 1. G, Abuses in internal conflict*

³⁵⁶ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 27 September 2019, *para. 19*

³⁵⁷ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 2. B, Freedom of peaceful assembly*

³⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2020](#) [Events in 2019], 2020

³⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch, [DR Congo: Authorities Foundering on Rights](#), 22 June 2020

In October 2020, Reporters Without Borders stated that an editor at a radio station in Goma, North Kivu, has been in hiding:

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and its local partner organization, Journalist in Danger (JED), condemn the death threats against a journalist in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo [...]

Rozenn Kalafulo, the editor of Pole FM, an independent community radio station in Goma, the capital of the eastern province of Nord-Kivu, has been in hiding for the past several days after witnesses told her they overheard army generals threaten her because of a question she put to the president. At a press conference on 8 October [2020] during a visit by President Tshisekedi to Goma, Kalafulo asked him about the business activities of certain high-ranking members of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) and about their potential links with armed groups. [...]

Journalists continue to be subjected to a high rate of abuses in the DRC. According to JED, at least 12 have been threatened and intimidated since the start of the year. Local officials and members of the security forces are often responsible for these press freedom violations.³⁶⁰

Amnesty International reported on the detention of 10 people who were peacefully protesting in Beni in December 2020:

Democratic Republic of Congo's authorities must immediately and unconditionally release 10 youth activists who are facing malicious charges solely for participating in a peaceful protest to demand the protection of civilians in Beni Town, Amnesty International said today ahead of their sentencing by a military court on 20 January [2021]. Eight of the 10 activists, belonging to the youth movement, Lutte pour le Changement (LUCHA), were arrested in Beni on 19 December [2020] after they staged a protest to denounce what they see as the UN peacekeeping force's failure to protect civilians in the area. Two other activists, also belonging to LUCHA, were arrested in Beni on 7 January [2021], during a peaceful protest against a new taxation on motorcycle taxis. [...]

During their arrest and detention, the activists were subjected to beatings by police officers and other inmates. Efforts by their lawyers to challenge the competence of the military jurisdiction on their case were rejected. The court is expected to pronounce its verdict on Wednesday 20 January 2021. The prosecution last week requested 10 years' imprisonment against them.³⁶¹

In early April 2021, Al Jazeera reported on violence and killings in North Kivu, including the killing of a demonstrator who died during a "clash between police and protesters rallying in Butembo over perceived UN failure to stem massacres":

Police in the city of Butembo in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have said a "stray bullet" killed a demonstrator in a protest against perceived failure by the United Nations' peacekeeping mission in the region to stem massacres of civilians by armed groups. "Stones were thrown when police moved in to remove a barricade. Unfortunately, a demonstrator was hit by a stray bullet and died," Jean-Paul Ngoma, local police chief, said on Friday. He did not say who fired the round.³⁶²

According to Reuters, on 30th April 2021 "armed police in Beni dispersed students who were staging an eight-day sit-in at the town hall to draw attention to the worsening security

³⁶⁰ RSF, [Radio journalist in hiding after death threats by generals in eastern DRC](#), 14 October 2020

³⁶¹ Amnesty International, [DRC: Authorities must immediately and unconditionally release 10 youth activists](#), 19 January 2021

³⁶² Al Jazeera, ['Stray bullet' kills DRC protester in anti-UN rally, police say](#), 9 April 2021

situation. Several students were wounded and others were arrested, according to a Reuters witness".³⁶³

Human Rights Watch reported in July 2021 that "Congoese authorities should immediately and unconditionally release two activists who were arbitrarily arrested on April 19, 2021, after peacefully demonstrating in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Human Rights Watch said. Elisée Lwatumba and Eric Muhindo, both members of the youth movement Struggle for Change (Lutte pour le Changement, or Lucha), were charged with "incitement to civil disobedience" and "threats of attack," and face up to five years in prison, their lawyer said. The arrest in North Kivu province of the two activists and the baseless charges against them is part of a government crackdown on pro-democracy groups, the media, and other dissenting voices, which has been tightening since early 2020. On May 6, 2021, nearly three weeks after their arrest, martial law was imposed on North Kivu and Ituri provinces, further threatening fundamental rights and freedoms, and effectively stalling all court cases".³⁶⁴

Curtailment of freedom of expression

Indicative of curtailments to freedom of expression, the regional organisation Observatoire de la liberté de la presse en Afrique (OLPA) [unofficial translation: Observatory of the Freedom of Press in Africa (OLPA)] published the following articles on its website within the time frame of this report [original title in French; presented in reverse chronological order]:

- [Nord-Kivu: OLPA exige une enquête après l'agression brutale d'un journaliste à Beni](#), 2 July 2021
- [OLPA exige une enquête après une incursion dans une radio de Butembo](#), 19 April 2021
- [OLPA condamne les brutalités policières contre un journaliste à Goma](#), 11 March 2021
- [OLPA exige une enquête après l'agression d'un journaliste à Oïcha](#), 3 March 2021
- [Nord-Kivu: OLPA exige une enquête après blessure par balle d'une journaliste à Goma](#), 17 February 2021
- [Nord-Kivu: OLPA surpris par l'interpellation de deux journalistes à Goma](#), 12 November 2020
- [Nord-Kivu : OLPA plaide pour les médias insécurisés sur l'axe Butembo-Mangurejipa](#), 25 September 2020
- [Nord-Kivu : OLPA s'insurge contre la confiscation du matériel des journalistes à Beni](#), 26 June 2020
- [Nord-Kivu : OLPA stupéfait par l'interpellation de deux journalistes à Goma](#), 18 December 2019
- [Nord-Kivu: OLPA condamne l'interpellation d'un journaliste à Goma](#), 29 November 2019
- [Nord-Kivu : OLPA s'insurge contre la mise à sac d'une station de radio à Oïcha](#), 11 September 2019

Reporters Without Borders reported in June 2021 that:

Freelance reporter Daniel Michombero told RSF that he was woken from his sleep on the night of 22 June [2021] by seven masked men in the uniforms of members of the DRC's armed forces, who used a hammer to smash a window and break into his home in Goma, the capital of Nord-Kivu province.

³⁶³ Reuters, [DR Congo declares state of siege over eastern bloodshed](#), 1 May 2021

³⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch, [DR Congo: Free Youth Activists, Three Months On, Elisée Lwatumba, Eric Muhindo Unjustly Detained](#), 19 July 2021

Armed with knives and gun, they threatened him, manhandled his wife and ransacked his home, taking all of his journalistic equipment including a computer, a camera and several phones. He said he reported the break-in to the authorities although he was unable to identify any of the intruders.

Michombero often works for Africa News, VOA and TV5 Monde and recently provided several reports about the latest eruption of Mount Nyiragongo, a volcano near Goma, which forced hundreds of thousands for people to evacuate the area and triggered a series of humanitarian and political crises in the province.

Michombero's reporting questioned the way these events were handled by the provincial government, which has been run by the military since the state of siege was declared on 9 May [2021] [...].³⁶⁵

The same source further noted:

Journalists have been the targets of abuses by soldiers since the start of the state of siege in Nord-Kivu and neighbouring Ituri province [...]

Earlier in May, Goma-based commander Gen. Aba Van Ang asked his soldiers to find journalist Paluku Riky in order to "flog" him and "punish" him for saying in a Facebook post that soldiers had fired on a civilian in Nord-Kivu.³⁶⁶

Curtailment of freedom of assembly

The U.S. Department of State's annual report on human rights reported that in 2020, "The constitution provides for freedom of peaceful assembly, but government authorities restricted this right and prevented those critical of the government from exercising their right to peaceful assembly, especially in [...] North Kivu [...]"³⁶⁷

Prison conditions

In April 2020, Human Rights Watch reported on prison conditions in Goma and Uvira, North and South Kivu respectively:

[...] Since March 21, 2020, magistrates have released just over 2,000 pretrial detainees and prisoners detained for low-level offenses to reduce the country's prison populations, according to the United Nations peacekeeping mission, MONUSCO. However, many more of the estimated 71 percent of detainees who have not been convicted of any crime or are awaiting trial should urgently be released, and those newly arrested for nonviolent or minor offenses should not be detained. "Congo's government needs to take bolder steps to prevent a major crisis in overcrowded prisons and jails," said Lewis Mudge, Central Africa director at Human Rights Watch. "It has inherited a prison system that has been neglected for decades and, with Covid-19 at the prison gates, the clock is ticking before a potential crisis unfolds." The Congolese government should quickly provide allocated funds to prisons and ensure that they provide inmates adequate food and medical care. The authorities should improve basic hygiene and sanitation, allow detainees' families to safely deliver much-needed food parcels, and ensure access to legal counsel. Congo's main prisons are at 432 percent of capacity, according to MONUSCO, making them some of the most overcrowded in the world. Prisons in the eastern cities of Goma and Uvira are over 600 percent capacity, while Kinshasa's central

³⁶⁵ Reporters Without Borders, [DRC soldiers must not be able to attack journalists with impunity, RSF says](#), 28 June 2021

³⁶⁶ Reporters Without Borders, [DRC soldiers must not be able to attack journalists with impunity, RSF says](#), 28 June 2021

³⁶⁷ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 2. B, Freedom of peaceful assembly*

prison, known as Makala, is at 461 percent, with hundreds of inmates crammed in together and no beds. [...] ³⁶⁸

7.2. South Kivu

Human rights violations that occur as part of the ongoing conflict in the Kivus and Ituri and are committed by non-state armed groups have been integrated in section sections [6. Overview of the Security Situation, including conflict-related human rights violations](#). For conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence and child recruitment see [section 8](#) and [section 9](#) of this report respectively.

The human rights situation described in this section relates specifically to reported state abuses committed in South Kivu. It is meant as indicative of the situation on the ground as found amongst the sources consulted for this report and thus provides a broad overview of human rights abuses committed in that province.

Arbitrary and unlawful killings

In June 2020, Al Jazeera reported on the killing of at least 12 people by a soldier in South Kivu:

A soldier in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has shot dead at least 12 people and wounded nine others in a drunken rampage, regional authorities have said. Security services are conducting a search for the gunman in the city of Sange, 24km (15 miles) from the Burundi border, where the shooting took place, the governor of South Kivu province, Theo Kasi, said in a statement on Friday. ³⁶⁹

Arbitrary arrests

The U.S. Department of State's annual report on human rights reported that "The UNJHRO reported that on April 11 [2020], FARDC soldiers arbitrarily arrested and illegally detained at least 35 persons in Uvira, South Kivu Province, for not participating in scheduled weekly community work on the renovation of a road. The detainees were released after paying a fine". ³⁷⁰

Curtailed freedom of expression

Human Rights Watch reported that due to COVID-19:

[...] The administration of President Felix Tshisekedi in the Democratic Republic of Congo has taken a serious downturn in respect for human rights in 2020. Congolese authorities have cracked down on peaceful critics, journalists, and political party members, while using state of emergency measures imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic as a pretext to curb political protests. [...] Heri Kalemaza, a 33-year-old lawyer and spokesperson for the Congolese Party for Progress (PCP) in South Kivu province, has been detained since March 4 [2020] on charges of contempt toward the provincial governor. "I started receiving intimidating WhatsApp messages from the governor's investigative cell telling me not to give any more broadcast interviews and stop criticizing the governor's performance," Kalemaza told Human Rights Watch. He was later arrested upon entering a radio studio. "The prosecutor told me to write

³⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, [DR Congo: Prisons Face Covid-19 Catastrophe](#), 17 April 2020

³⁶⁹ Al Jazeera, [Soldier in eastern DRC shoots and kills at least 12 civilians](#), 31 June 2020

³⁷⁰ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 1. A, Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

a letter of apology to the governor in order to shut the case, but I refused because this would be incriminating myself.” Kalemaza is facing trial at Bukavu’s central prison. [...] ³⁷¹

In September 2020, Reporters Without Borders condemned the arrest of a journalist in South Kivu, who was accused of defaming former President Joseph Kabila’s lawyer:

Joseph Kabila ceased to be president more than 18 months ago, but Congolese media are still being persecuted as they were during his 19 years in power and Kabila continues to pose a threat to them.

Justin Murhu, a reporter for [deboutRDC.net](#), a popular news website that covers human rights-related stories in the eastern DRC, is among the latest victims. He was arrested yesterday after being summoned by a court in Sud-Kivu’s capital, Bukavu. Patrick Babwine, the site’s editor, was summoned to appear before the same court today. The two journalists are being sued for defamation by Kabila family lawyer Jean Claude Zihahirwa over an article posted on the website on 24 August [2020]. It quoted sources as saying that Zihahirwa, accompanied by soldiers, visited people to dissuade them from testifying about their eviction from land claimed by Kabila in a locality known as Mbobero. ³⁷²

During the same month, Reporters Without Borders reported that a radio station in South Kivu was stormed by armed men:

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) calls on the authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo to do what is necessary to identify and arrest three heavily armed men who stormed into a small radio station in the eastern province of Sud-Kivu and threatened its director. The authorities must also protect the station’s director, RSF said. Based in Fizi, in the south of Sud-Kivu province, Radio Ngoma ya Amani (RNA) received the visit from three masked men armed with Kalashnikovs on the night of 27 September [2020]. After asking for the director, Byobe Malenga, and learning he was not there, they went to his home but he was fortunately not at home either. The next day, Malenga – who is also the BBC’s Swahili-language correspondent in the region – alerted local security officials, one of whom simply advised him to “take precautions.” Fearing for his life, Malenga fled the area by canoe. When reached by RSF, Malenga said he has received many threatening messages, which RSF has been able to view. Some of the social media messages accuse him of reporting “the enlistment of Burundian refugees in armed groups.” Other messages, such as one from the DRC’s decentralization minister, Azarias Ruberwa, accuse him of being “in the service of the Mai Mai,” a militia active in the region. [...]

This is the second time in the past few days that RSF has learned of a Congolese journalist being forced to flee or go into hiding after receiving death threats. Rozenn Kalafulo, the editor of Pole FM, a radio station based in the neighbouring province of Nord-Kivu, has been in hiding for the past week after learning that senior army officers had threatened to kill her. ³⁷³

Amnesty International reported in September 2020:

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the United Nations (UN) must take urgent and concrete measures to protect Denis Mukwege, a doctor and Nobel Laureate who is receiving death threats for demanding accountability and justice for serious crimes perpetrated in the country, said Sarah Jackson, Amnesty International’s Deputy Regional Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes. [...]

In July 2020 Dr Mukwege spoke out against a new wave of killings perpetrated in eastern DRC, where crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations and abuses have been committed for decades. [...]

³⁷¹ Human Rights Watch, [DR Congo: Authorities Foundering on Rights](#), 22 June 2020

³⁷² RSF, [Lawsuit by Kabila lawyer threatens two Congolese journalists](#), 3 September 2020

³⁷³ RSF, [Journalist flees after heavily-armed men burst into his radio station](#), 15 October 2020

Since July [2020, Dr Mukwege has been receiving death threats in a targeted campaign of intimidation, through social media, phone calls and direct messages. His family and colleagues at Panzi hospital have also been targeted.³⁷⁴

In January 2021, Human Rights Watch documented that:

[...] *Bukavu, South Kivu Province*

On December 1 [2020], police allegedly beat several journalists – Jérémie Matabaro, Prince Cikala, Bertin Bulonza, Emmanuel Deward Chuma, and Claude Musengero – as they covered a student protest. The police confiscated Matabaro's equipment, and he and Cikala were injured.

Patrice Lwabaguma, Patrick Nyamatomwa, and Gédéon Fikiri Kanigi, all activists, were arrested on July 20 and accused of threatening state security, after flags of a so-called "Kivu Republic" were raised in Bukavu earlier that month. They remain in detention at Bukavu's central prison while awaiting a verdict from the court. Lwabaguma had initiated a petition calling for the release of Tshisekedi's former chief of staff, Vital Kamerhe, who had been sentenced to 20 years in prison for corruption.³⁷⁵

Prison conditions

In April 2020, Human Rights Watch reported on prison conditions in Goma and Uvira, North and South Kivu respectively:

[...] Since March 21, 2020, magistrates have released just over 2,000 pretrial detainees and prisoners detained for low-level offenses to reduce the country's prison populations, according to the United Nations peacekeeping mission, MONUSCO. However, many more of the estimated 71 percent of detainees who have not been convicted of any crime or are awaiting trial should urgently be released, and those newly arrested for nonviolent or minor offenses should not be detained. "Congo's government needs to take bolder steps to prevent a major crisis in overcrowded prisons and jails," said Lewis Mudge, Central Africa director at Human Rights Watch. "It has inherited a prison system that has been neglected for decades and, with Covid-19 at the prison gates, the clock is ticking before a potential crisis unfolds." The Congolese government should quickly provide allocated funds to prisons and ensure that they provide inmates adequate food and medical care. The authorities should improve basic hygiene and sanitation, allow detainees' families to safely deliver much-needed food parcels, and ensure access to legal counsel. Congo's main prisons are at 432 percent of capacity, according to MONUSCO, making them some of the most overcrowded in the world. Prisons in the eastern cities of Goma and Uvira are over 600 percent capacity, while Kinshasa's central prison, known as Makala, is at 461 percent, with hundreds of inmates crammed in together and no beds. [...]³⁷⁶

Access to justice and violations of fair trials

In September 2019, the Africa Center for Strategic Studies reported on an interview with a focus group in South Kivu on the issue of access to justice:

[...] The research confirmed that current efforts by the international community and the Government of the DRC have done little to improve access to justice for Congolese citizens. Formal courts are often far away and the cost of accessing the system is high. Furthermore,

³⁷⁴ Amnesty International, [Democratic Republic of Congo: Concrete actions must be taken to protect Denis Mukwege after death threats](#), 4 September 2020

³⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch, [DR Congo: Repression Escalates](#), 28 January 2021

³⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch, [DR Congo: Prisons Face Covid-19 Catastrophe](#), 17 April 2020

the courts are widely believed to be corrupt. Fines are considered too high, as are court fees, and this results in people spending long periods in—the often abysmal—prison system.³⁷⁷

In February 2020 Amnesty International reported the following with regards to the trial of eight Twa people found guilty of illegal activities in Kahuzi Biega National Park, South Kivu:

[...] In February, six Twa men, including key negotiator Chief Jean-Marie Kasula, and two Twa women, were found guilty of illegal activities in the Park. Their one-day trial before a military tribunal fell far short of international standards for fair trial and they were sentenced to between one and 15 years in prison. Four of the eight were released on bail from Bukavu prison in August. An appeal against their convictions had not been heard at the end of the year.³⁷⁸

7.3. Ituri

Human rights violations that occur as part of the ongoing conflict in the Kivus and Ituri and are committed by non-state armed groups have been integrated in section [sections 6. Overview of the Security Situation, including conflict-related human rights violations](#). For conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence and child recruitment see [section 8](#) and [section 9](#) of this report respectively.

The human rights situation described in this section relates specifically to reported state abuses committed in Ituri. It is meant as indicative of the situation on the ground as found amongst the sources consulted for this report and thus provides a broad overview of human rights abuses committed in that province.

Summary executions and arbitrary arrests

The U.S. Department of State's annual report on human rights reported that “the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) released a report covering violence in North Kivu and Ituri Provinces between January 1, 2019, and January 31, 2020, related to the ADF and FARDC's campaign against that group. The report identified abuses committed by SSF during the campaign against ADF, especially following a large-scale deployment in October 2019. The report described eight summary executions by the FARDC and the arbitrary arrests of 91 persons, including at least four children”.³⁷⁹

Curtailement of freedom of expression

The Committee to Protect Journalists reported in April 2021:

[...] Journalists in Ituri province have faced persistent insecurity in recent years; in 2019 Papy Mumbere Mahamba, a reporter with the local Radio Communautaire de Lwemba broadcaster, was killed after broadcasting advice and information about the response to an Ebola outbreak in the area, according to CPJ research. Also in 2019, unidentified individuals set fire to RCAB's office and left leaflets threatening its staffers, according to news reports and Kambale.

³⁷⁷ Africa Center for Strategic Studies, [Securing Legitimate Stability in the DRC: External Assumptions and Local Perspectives](#), 30 September 2019

³⁷⁸ Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Report 2020/21, The State of the World's Human Rights](#), 7 April 2021

³⁷⁹ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 1. G, Abuses in internal conflict*

In January 2020, unidentified people attacked Katoto, stole his recording equipment, and ordered him to stop his coverage of the Ebola outbreak that was ongoing at the time, he told CPJ.³⁸⁰

In June 2021 Reporters Without Borders reported that it was “extremely concerned to learn that a radio journalist in Ituri, one of the two provinces in the northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo that has been under a state of siege since 6 May [2021], was threatened by a soldier in connection with his reporting. This intimidation attempt marks yet another step backwards for journalists’ safety in the DRC”.³⁸¹

8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)

General situation in the conflict areas of Eastern DRC

In its report covering the period 29 June to 25 September 2019 the UN Secretary General noted that “during the second quarter [2019], over 300 women, 70 girls and one man were victims of various forms of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, gang rape and forced marriage. Over half the incidents were perpetrated by armed groups in North Kivu, which was the province most affected by sexual violence, followed by Tanganyika and South Kivu”.³⁸²

The UN Secretary-General report on MONUSCO’s activities noted that “in 2019, 1,409 cases of conflict-related sexual violence were documented, of which 955 were attributed to armed groups. FARDC was implicated in 383 of those incidents, which represents a 76 per cent increase compared with the previous year [2018]”.³⁸³

Between 29 November to 2 December 2019, the Special Representative to the UN Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict toured eastern DRC and noted that “sexual violence is still a painful reality of conflict”.³⁸⁴

Reporting on events in 2020, Amnesty International documented an increase in sexual violence against women and girls in May 2020:

[...] There was an increase in sexual violence against women and girls, particularly in the context of the conflict in the east. In May [2020], the UNJHRO reported 79 such cases, up from 53 in April, against women who were attacked by armed groups. While armed groups were the main perpetrators, state security forces were also accused of responsibility for at least 26 cases of sexual violence against women between April and May [2020].³⁸⁵

³⁸⁰ Committee to Protect Journalists, [Congolese security forces threaten 2 radio stations over reports on military abuse](#), 6 April 2021

³⁸¹ Reporters Without Borders, [Radio journalist threatened by soldier in northeastern DRC](#), 15 June 2021

³⁸² UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), 27 September 2019, para. 59

³⁸³ UN Secretary-General, [Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 18 March 2020, para. 25

³⁸⁴ MONUSCO News, [DRC: Sexual Violence Still a Painful Reality of Conflict, A UN Official Says](#), 4 December 2019

³⁸⁵ Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Report 2020/21, The State of the World’s Human Rights](#), 7 April 2021

In a later report covering the period 17 March 2020 to 16 June 2020, the UN Secretary General noted that “at least 254 women and 67 children were victims of conflict-related sexual violence, including 250 by armed groups, in particular FDLR, and 71 by State agents, in particular FARDC. The vast majority of these incidents were documented in North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces”.³⁸⁶

In the MONUSCO report covering the period 17 June to 18 September 2020, it was noted that:

At least 274 persons (182 women, two men and 90 children) were subjected to sexual violence in conflict areas in the second quarter of 2020, representing a notable decrease from the 321 victims recorded in the previous quarter, partly as a result of continued advocacy by MONUSCO. As with other human rights violations, North Kivu was the province most affected (66 victims), followed by Ituri (61 victims) and South Kivu (48 victims).³⁸⁷

Additionally, the same report noted as well that:

Combatants of various armed groups and militias were responsible for conflict-related sexual violence against nearly 70 per cent of all victims recorded (191 victims, comprising two men, 134 women and 55 children). Among them, Djugu-based assailants were the main perpetrators (53 victims), followed by Twa militia members (33 victims) and NDC-R and Raia Mutomboki combatants (27 victims each). The remaining 30 per cent of the violations were committed by State agents (83 victims, comprising 48 women and 35 children), mainly FARDC soldiers (62 victims) and Congolese National Police agents (17 victims).³⁸⁸

The UN Secretary General report covering the period 19 September to 1 December 2020 noted that “between July and October, 248 victims of conflict-related sexual violence, including 152 women, 94 girls and 2 men, were documented by the Mission”.³⁸⁹

The U.S Department of State noted in its annual human rights report covering 2020 that “crimes of sexual violence were sometimes committed as a tactic of war to punish civilians for having perceived allegiances to rival parties or groups. The crimes occurred throughout the country but principally in the conflict zones in North and South Kivu Provinces”.³⁹⁰

Amnesty International’s annual human rights report covering 2020 highlighted that “there was an increase in sexual violence against women and girls, particularly in the context of the conflict in the east. In May [2020], the UNJHRO reported 79 such cases, up from 53 in April [2020], against women who were attacked by armed groups. While armed groups were the main perpetrators, state security forces were also accused of responsibility for at least 26 cases of sexual violence against women between April and May [2020]”.³⁹¹

The UN Security Council in its report covering the period from January to December 2020 noted with regards to conflict-related sexual violence in the DRC that “where conflict was

³⁸⁶ UN Secretary General, [Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 18 June 2020, para.20

³⁸⁷ UN Secretary General, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 21 September 2020, para. 56

³⁸⁸ UN Secretary General, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 21 September 2020, para. 57

³⁸⁹ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), 30 November 2020, para. 53

³⁹⁰ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 1. G, Abuses in internal conflict

³⁹¹ Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2020/21](#), 7 April 2021, p. 140

linked to disputes over natural resources, armed groups used sexual violence as a tactic to dehumanize and displace populations”.³⁹²

The same report further noted that “conflict-related sexual violence remained widespread in the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri and Tanganyika” and in 2020 “MONUSCO documented 1,053 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, affecting 675 women, 370 girls, 3 men and 5 boys. [...] The majority (700) were attributed to non-State armed groups. State actors accounted for the remaining cases, 239 of which were attributed to the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 76 to the Congolese National Police and 38 to other State actors”.³⁹³

Referring to human rights violations throughout 2020 as documented and confirmed by the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO), its analysis for the year found:

The UNJHRO documented a significant decrease in the number of adult victims of sexual violence in 2020, with at least 680 victims, including six men (-35% compared to 1,054 victims in 2019). The majority of those affected in 2020 were victims of sexual violence attributable to combatants of armed groups or militias (70%), while the remaining 30% were subjected to sexual violence by state agents, mainly by FARDC soldiers (20%). Among the armed groups and militias, FDLR combatants caused the largest number of victims (15%), followed by Twa Apana militia (10%), various Mayi-Mayi groups (9%), Nyatura (8%), NDC (7%), and other armed groups, the Djugu-based armed assailants and the Rayia Mutomboki (6% each). This is reflected at the level of the most affected provinces which are North-Kivu (43% of the total number of adult victims of sexual violence), followed by South-Kivu (17%), Ituri (13%), Maniema, Haut-Katanga and Tanganyika (8% each), and Kasai-Central (2%). It should be noted that North-Kivu is affected by a wide variety of armed groups whose main perpetrators of sexual violence are FDLR (responsible for 35% of victims of sexual violence committed in this province), Nyatura (20%) and NDC (16%).³⁹⁴

With regards to children the report noted:

Throughout 2020, at least 396 girls and two boys were victims of rape and other sexual violence.

State agents are responsible for 137 of these acts of violence, including 92 attributable to FARDC soldiers and 41 to PNC agents. The main perpetrators of sexual violence among armed groups are the Nyatura (50 children), NDC-R (40), Djugu-based armed assailants (31) and the Mayi-Mayi Mazembe (20). This violence was mainly recorded in the provinces of North-Kivu (192 children), the Kasai region (58), Ituri (50) and South-Kivu (47).³⁹⁵

Médecins Sans Frontières reported that “Minors are significantly impacted by sexual assault: in 2020, nearly one in five (19%) victims treated by MSF was under the age of 18. There are significant variations between the different areas where MSF works, including the average

³⁹² UN Security Council, [Conflict-related sexual violence, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 March 2021, para. 12

³⁹³ UN Secretary General, [Conflict-related sexual violence, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 March 2021, para. 28

³⁹⁴ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, para. 38

³⁹⁵ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, para. 62

age of child survivors. In Walikale territory, in North-Kivu, the average age of child survivors was 13”.³⁹⁶

The UN Security Council report listed the following as “parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict”:

1. Non-State actors:

- (a) Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain-Janvier;
- (b) Allied Democratic Forces;
- (c) Bana Mura militias;
- (d) Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda;
- (e) Force de résistance patriotique de l’Ituri;
- (f) Kamuina Nsapu;
- (g) Lord’s Resistance Army;
- (h) Nduma défense du Congo;
- (i) Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové faction led by “General” Guidon Shimiray Mwissa and faction led by Commander Gilbert Bwira Shuo and Deputy Commander Fidel Malik Mapenzi;
- (j) Mai-Mai Kifuafua;
- (k) Mai-Mai Simba;
- (l) Nyatura;
- (m) Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki;
- (n) Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale;
- (o) Mai-Mai Malaika;
- (p) Mai-Mai Fimbo na Fimbo;
- (q) Mai-Mai Yakutumba;
- (r) Coopérative pour le développement du Congo;
- (s) Twa militias;
- (t) Mai-Mai forces patriotiques populaires-armée du peuple.

2. State actors:

- (a) Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo;
- (b) Congolese National Police.³⁹⁷

Insecurity Insight, which monitors “incidents around the world affecting aid, health care, education, and protection” summarised in [this document](#), “publicly reported cases of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by law enforcement bodies, conflict related sexual violence, and sexual violence that targets IDPs / refugees or vulnerable beneficiaries”, including in Ituri (7 incidents), North Kivu (11 incidents) and South Kivu (9 incidents) between January and October 2020.³⁹⁸

The UN Secretary-General report on MONUSCO’s activities covering the period from 2 December 2020 to 18 March 2021 noted that:

In December 2020 and January 2021, at least 92 adults, including 1 man, were victims of conflict-related sexual violence, mainly perpetrated by armed groups, especially NDC-R and Twa militia elements. Of the conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by State agents, FARDC accounted for 20 per cent, while the Congolese National Police accounted for 7 per

³⁹⁶ Medecins Sans Frontieres, [Sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, The critical need for a comprehensive response to address the needs of survivors](#), July 2021, p. 11

³⁹⁷ UN Security Council, [Conflict-related sexual violence, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 March 2021, Annex, p. 28/29

³⁹⁸ Insecurity Insight, [Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, January to October 2020](#), November 2020

cent. North Kivu recorded the largest share of documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence (39 per cent), followed by South Kivu and Tanganyika.³⁹⁹

However, the UNJHRO report also noted the difficulties in collecting information on sexual violence given the COVID-19 pandemic:

It should be noted that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on the collection of information on sexual violence. The restrictions on movement imposed at national and provincial level prevented UNJHRO teams and its partners from going to certain places where violence has been committed to interview victims and provide them with the necessary support. Victims were also afraid to go to health centres and one-stop-shops for fear of contracting the disease or being stigmatised within the communities. To address these challenges, an information collection mechanism was put in place to support civil society organisations in collecting information and supporting victims. Nevertheless, the lifting of the state of emergency in July allowed the deployment of missions to collect information on conflict-related sexual violence and reduced barriers to access to services for survivors. For example, the lifting of travel restrictions in provinces such as Nord-Kivu has made it easier for survivors in rural areas to access medical care in one-stop centres, including those in Goma and Bukavu.⁴⁰⁰

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 19 March and 18 June 2021, the situation was described as follows:

From March to April [2021], MONUSCO verified 281 grave violations against children, representing an increase of 27.6 per cent compared with the previous reporting period [...] Twenty girls were raped or subjected to other forms of sexual violence. Eight rapes were attributed to State agents, representing a drop of 11 per cent compared with the previous period [...]

Between March and April [2021], at least 124 adults, including 1 man, were victims of documented conflict-related sexual violence, mostly in South Kivu (36 per cent of victims), Ituri (27 per cent of victims) and North Kivu (14 per cent of victims). Of these adults, 65 were victims of conflict-related sexual violence committed by armed groups, 50 were victims of FARDC soldiers and 8 were victims of Congolese National Police officers. Among the armed groups, Nyatura, Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki and FDLR were the main perpetrators.⁴⁰¹

8.1. North Kivu

See also information included under section [8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#).

8.1.1. Armed forces

Covering the period 17 March 2020 to 16 June 2020 the UN Secretary General reported that "sexual violence perpetrated by FARDC also continued to be documented in North Kivu, particularly in the context of military operations against ADF in the Beni and Butembo areas".⁴⁰²

³⁹⁹ UN Secretary-General, [Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 18 March 2021, para. 56

⁴⁰⁰ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, para. 39

⁴⁰¹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 June 2021, paras. 63 and 66

⁴⁰² UN Secretary General, [Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 18 June 2020, para.57

The U.S. Department of State's 2020 annual human rights report included information from MONUSCO which reported that "on May 2 [2020], in North Kivu's Nyiragongo territory, FDLR combatants raped two women, killing one of them".⁴⁰³

Covering the period January to December 2020, the UN report noted that "sexual violence continued during military operations against armed groups, including in North Kivu".⁴⁰⁴

The UN report covering the period 2 December 2020 to 18 March 2021 documented that "from 1 November 2020 to 28 February 2021, six allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, all involving military contingent members, were recorded and have been referred to the troop-contributing countries concerned for investigation".⁴⁰⁵

8.1.2. Non-state armed groups

While reporting on the issue of conflict related sexual violence in the UN report covering the period 29 June to 25 September 2019 it was noted that "among armed groups, members of FDLR and NDC-R were the main perpetrators in North Kivu".⁴⁰⁶

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering November 2019 to 25 April 2020:

Combatants from NDC-R, led by sanctioned individual Guidon Shimiray Mwissa (CDi.033), and from CMC/FDP, led by Ndaruhutse Kamanzi Dominique, also known as Domi, committed widespread conflict-related sexual violence amidst recurrent combat operations in Masisi and Rutshuru territories from January 2019 to February 2020. However, the commanders of both armed groups, who had effective control, failed to take necessary measures to punish subordinates responsible for those acts, despite awareness thereof.⁴⁰⁷

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its subsequent report covering November 2019 to 25 April 2020:

The Group found that armed combatants, especially those from NDC-R, led by sanctioned individual Guidon (CDi.033), and CMC/FDP, led by Domi, committed widespread conflict-related sexual violence amidst recurrent fighting in Masisi and Rutshuru territories from January 2019 to February 2020 [...]

Those acts included rape, gang rape, some instances of sexual slavery and forced marriage. Such acts may amount to torture, may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, and are sanctionable under paragraph 7 (e) of Security Council resolution 2293 (2016), as renewed by the Council in paragraph 2 of its resolution 2478 (2019).

Some NDC-R and CMC/FDP commanders committed those acts, and commanders of both armed groups, who had effective control, failed to take the necessary measures to punish

⁴⁰³ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 1. G, Abuses in internal conflict

⁴⁰⁴ UN Secretary General, [Conflict-related sexual violence, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 March 2021, para. 28

⁴⁰⁵ UN Secretary-General, [Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 18 March 2021, para. 73

⁴⁰⁶ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), 27 September 2019, para. 60

⁴⁰⁷ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 2 June 2020, Summary

subordinates responsible for those acts, despite awareness thereof or owing to wilful ignorance.⁴⁰⁸

The same report noted with regards to the impact of the rape:

According to one source, rape was so widespread that it was considered a “normal” occurrence. [...]

The impacts of rape were devastating for the victims, their children and the very social fabric of the society. Several victims were badly wounded while resisting rape. Rape exacerbated vulnerability when victims were already displaced or had to leave their village because of the rape. Several were left with the impossible choice of returning to the scene of the rape and risking being raped again or losing their means of subsistence. Many were rejected by their husbands and/or family, and/or were stigmatized by their community.⁴⁰⁹

Similarly, Médecins Sans Frontières reported that “The shame and fear of being stigmatised experienced by girls who have been sexually abused can sometimes affect the whole family. In some areas, such as Walikale (North-Kivu), MSF teams have observed that ‘amicable’ solutions, such as forced marriages, are employed by some families in order to preserve honour and guarantee a place in society for young survivors.”.⁴¹⁰

In the report covering the period 17 March 2020 to 16 June 2020, the UN Secretary General noted that “among the armed groups active in the area (North Kivu), NDC-R fighters committed the greatest number of human rights violations, including conflict related sexual violence”.⁴¹¹

In the report covering the period 19 September to 1 December 2020 the UN Secretary General noted that “overall, armed groups were responsible for 55 per cent of conflict-related sexual violence-related incidents, with North Kivu representing the most-affected province”.⁴¹²

The UN report covering the period 1 January to 31 December 2020 noted that:

Armed groups continued to use sexual violence as a tactic to assert control over natural resources in North Kivu. [...] The perpetration of sexual violence by Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda was widespread, reflecting persistent patterns of attacks against women and girls collecting firewood in Virunga National Park. In the mining areas of North Kivu, Mai-Mai forces patriotiques populaires-armée du peuple, which were formerly part of Mai-Mai Mazembe, were implicated in patterns of sexual slavery.⁴¹³

Specifically reporting on the Katsiru area of North Kivu, Human Rights Watch stated:

[...] Sexual Violence in Masisi and Rutshuru

⁴⁰⁸ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 2 June 2020, para. 114

⁴⁰⁹ UN Security Council, [Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 2 June 2020, paras. 135 and 136

⁴¹⁰ Médecins Sans Frontières, [Sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, The critical need for a comprehensive response to address the needs of survivors](#), July 2021, p. 12

⁴¹¹ UN Secretary General, [Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 18 June 2020, para. 12

⁴¹² UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 November 2020, para. 53

⁴¹³ UN Secretary General, [Conflict-related sexual violence, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 March 2021, para. 29

Human Rights Watch interviewed rape survivors and heard credible reports of dozens of other cases of sexual violence in the Katsiru area. In January 2020, NDC-R fighters captured four women peeling bananas in a plantation and raped them. One woman who was seriously injured died on her way to Mweso hospital, near Katsiru, said one survivor. In February [2020], another rape survivor said: “Not one day goes by without a woman who has been raped going to the health center.... [The NDC-R fighters] tell us that the Nyatura [another armed group] are our children. ‘We must rape you,’ they say.” Human Rights Watch also interviewed seven women and three girls from Masisi raped by NDC-R fighters. An 18-year-old woman said that Guidon’s troops stopped her on her way to Bibwe market in September 2019, accusing her of not paying the monthly tax. They stole her money and beat her severely. She said they put her in a small house where a fighter raped her at least twice. She was released after her mother gave them a goat. In January 2020, a 14-year-old girl, displaced to Mpati, was walking on the road with two girlfriends when three NDC-R fighters stopped and raped them in the nearby bush. “When we resisted, they told us, ‘We’re going to kill you,’ so we couldn’t do anything,” she said. The three girls were taken to an NDC-R position but managed to escape overnight during an attack from the Nyatura. Human Rights Watch also heard credible reports of girls being held as sex slaves for several days or weeks in the NDC-R camps. An activist described this situation in Katsiru in February: When [NDC-R fighters] meet pretty underage girls, they forcibly take them to their camps.... They use them as wives for a while, then chase them away. They have to go home. It’s like taking turns; they take other pretty girls afterwards. That’s what happens. They are kept for several days before being chased away. The families of these girls don’t know how to protest – if they did, they could be killed. A 45-year-old woman said NDC-R fighters abducted her 14-year-old daughter along with four other girls in March 2019. They were in a camp in Mpati where they had been displaced. She said the fighters took them to their position and several men repeatedly raped them. Her daughter was only able to escape two months later. The woman said that in July 2019, four NDC-R fighters came to their house and forced her to lead them to her daughter, who had gone into hiding. They took them to their position, where they beat them and detained them in an underground pit – common in NDC-R positions – with their hands and feet tied. NDC-R fighters repeatedly raped both of them. The mother was released nine days later, and the daughter was freed eventually, following ransom payments. Fearing further retaliation, the daughter fled Mpati. In June, the UN Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo found that armed combatants, especially those from NDC-R and the Collectif des mouvements pour le changement/Forces de défense du peuple (CMC/FDP), a coalition of Nyatura militias, had “committed widespread conflict-related sexual violence amidst recurrent fighting in Masisi and Rutshuru territories from January 2019 to February 2020.... Those acts included rape, gang rape, some instances of sexual slavery and forced marriage” that “may amount to torture, may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.” The Group of Experts further noted that, “Some NDC-R and CMC/FDP commanders committed those acts, and commanders of both armed groups, who had effective control, failed to take the necessary measures to punish subordinates responsible for those acts, despite awareness thereof or owing to willful ignorance”.⁴¹⁴

8.1.3. Non-state individuals

Human Rights Watch reported on kidnapping, torture, rape and murder of civilians near the Virunga National Park in North Kivu, where also a number of hostages were taken by gangs to extort money from families:

Criminal gangs have kidnapped for ransom at least 170 people near the Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo between April 2017 and March 2020. Small groups armed with guns and machetes have beaten, tortured, and murdered hostages, raping women and

⁴¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, [DR Congo: Wanted Warlord Preys on Civilians](#), 20 October 2020

girls, who make up more than half of them, while using threats to extort money from their families. [...]

The Kivu Security Tracker, a joint project of Human Rights Watch and the Congo Research Group, reported that armed assailants kidnapped at least 775 people since 2017 in Rutshuru territory alone, and 1,190 throughout North Kivu province. Thus far in 2020, the Kivu Security Tracker reported that at least 200 people have been abducted for ransom in the province. In most reported cases, gangs of three to five men armed with guns and machetes abducted people in their fields or on the road. The kidnappers often initially pretended to be harmless, claiming to be soldiers or approaching their victims to ask for water. The kidnappers would release some people, such as young children and older people, who were given the kidnappers' phone numbers, so that their families could contact and negotiate ransoms for those being held. The gangs have detained hostages in Virunga National Park [...]

Women and girls said the captors methodically raped the female hostages, except prepubescent girls and older women. Many were also badly beaten. "The kidnappers told us that no woman would come out of there untouched," said a 28-year-old survivor [...]

Sexual Violence In most of the cases reported to Human Rights Watch, the women and girls kidnapped were routinely and repeatedly raped, several times a day, and sometimes by several men. Their abductors often raped them next to male hostages, who remained bound.⁴¹⁵

Between December 2019 through June 2020, Human Rights Watch documented and interviewed "28 female survivors of sexual violence, 5 of whom were children at the time of the abuse" who stated that "they were abducted [by gangs], sometimes with their infants, while working in the fields or on the way home, near the town of Kiwanja. Their abductors would force them to walk, hands tied, for several hours into nearby Virunga National Park" where "women and girls were often raped multiple times a day and sometimes by multiple men".⁴¹⁶

The Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada conducting research on domestic and sexual violence in the DRC between 2019 and March 2021 reported that:

UN Women reports that during the COVID-19 pandemic, violence increased by 99 percent in North Kivu province (UN 1 Sept. 2020). A December 2020 report by UNICEF's Social Sciences Analytics Cell (CASS) on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls in the DRC notes that there has been an increase in the incidence of SGBV in the country and that it has been "particularly severe" in North Kivu and its capital, Goma (UN Dec. 2020). The same source reports that there has been an increase in the number of SGBV cases being seen at health care centres (UN Dec. 2020). The CASS report notes that the NGO Médecins du monde "reported double the number of cases of SGBV received in its health centres in Kinshasa between April and June" (UN Dec. 2020). A June 2020 Reuters article reports that the volume of calls to the [Kinshasa-based (UN Dec. 2020)] Forum of Women Citizens and Activists for Governance, Democracy and Development (Forum des femmes citoyennes et engagées pour la gouvernance, la démocratie et le développement), which runs "Congo's first domestic abuse hotline," "has increased tenfold in recent months" (Reuters 2 June 2020). The CASS report notes that the same hotline "recorded 20 times more calls from women than men" during the national state of emergency from April to July and that 78 percent of the calls received during this time concerned physical and sexual violence against children under the age of 14 (UN Dec. 2020). [...]⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, [DR Congo: Gangs Kidnap, Rape in National Park](#), 30 July 2020

⁴¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, [DR Congo: Gangs Kidnap, Rape in National Park](#), 30 July 2020

⁴¹⁷ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, [Democratic Republic of the Congo: Domestic and sexual violence, including treatment of survivors; legislation; state protection and support services \(2019–March 2021\)](#), 19 March 2021

In September 2020 The Guardian reported that more than 50 women said they were exploited by men who said they were international workers in the DRC:

More than 50 women have accused aid workers from the World Health Organization and leading NGOs of sexual exploitation and abuse during efforts to fight Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In interviews, 51 women – many of whose accounts were backed up by aid agency drivers and local NGO workers – recounted multiple incidents of abuse, mainly by men who said they were international workers, during the 2018 to 2020 Ebola crisis, according to an investigation by the New Humanitarian and the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The majority of the women said numerous men had either propositioned them, forced them to have sex in exchange for a job or terminated contracts when they refused. The number and similarity of many of the accounts from women in the eastern city of Beni suggests the practice was widespread, with three organisations vowing to investigate the accusations uncovered. [...] Some women said they were plied with drinks, others said they were ambushed in offices and hospitals, and some said they were locked in rooms by men who promised jobs or threatened to fire them if they did not comply. [...] Some women were cooks, cleaners and community outreach workers hired on short-term contracts, earning \$50 to \$100 (£40 to £80) a month – more than twice the normal wage. One woman was an Ebola survivor seeking psychological help. At least two women said they became pregnant. Many women said they had not until now reported the incidents for fear of reprisals or losing their jobs. Most also said they were ashamed. Some women said abuse occurred as recently as March [2020].⁴¹⁸

8.1.4. State protection availability

In a report covering the period 29 June to 25 September 2019 the UN Secretary General noted that “The reporting period also saw the investigation and prosecution of emblematic cases of crimes against humanity, including conflict-related sexual violence. [...] The Sheka trial in North Kivu and the preparation of the Kokodikoko hearings in South Kivu involved approximately 175 victims of conflict-related sexual violence, as well as other human rights violations perpetrated in Mwenga and Shabunda territories”.⁴¹⁹

In its letter dated June 2020, the UN Group of Experts on the DRC highlighted that:

The threatening and violent behaviour of NDC-R commanders and combatants deterred people from reporting rape, even had a sanctions system existed. Victims, civil society representatives and MONUSCO sources unanimously mentioned serious risks of retaliation associated with reporting rape committed by NDC-R combatants (see annex 67). Rapists threatened three victims with death if they reported them, and some rapists threatened the same if victims sought medical treatment, according to one civil society source. NDC-R combatants destroyed post-rape medical consultation forms and pages mentioning rape from registers in health centres in Bashali and Bwito chefferies, according to two civil society sources. Eight victims and two civil society sources confirmed that carrying such consultation forms exposed individuals to a high risk if checked at NDC-R checkpoints. Two civil society sources highlighted that NDC-R commanders’ awareness of the legal implications of rape led to denial.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ The Guardian, [More than 50 women in DRC allege abuse by Ebola aid workers](#), 29 September 2020

⁴¹⁹ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), 27 September 2019, para. 62

⁴²⁰ UN Security Council, [Letter dated 2 June 2020 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council](#), 2 June 2020, para. 126

According to Amnesty International's human rights report covering the period 2020, "on 23 November [2020], the North-Kivu operational military court sentenced warlord Ntabo Ntaberi alias Sheka, leader of the Nduma Defense of Congo, to life imprisonment for serious crimes committed against civilians in North Kivu between 2007 and 2017. Charges included the rape of some 400 women, men and children in 2010".⁴²¹

8.2. South Kivu

See also information included under section [8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#).

8.2.1. Armed forces

Beyond the more general information included under sections [6. Overview of the Security Situation including conflict-related human rights violations](#) and [8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#) very little specific information was found amongst the sources consulted within the time frame for this report.

With regards to "conflicts involving armed groups and government forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo", the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reported in June 2020 that "in South Kivu, [...] FARDC soldiers have also been responsible for human rights violations, including the killing of at least 15 people and sexual violence against 13 women".⁴²²

8.2.2. Non-state armed groups

The UN noted in the report covering the period January to December 2020 that "in South Kivu, Mai-Mai and other militias carried out retaliatory attacks against civilians, resulting in mass displacement and exposing women and girls to sexual violence".⁴²³

Similarly, the UN Group of Experts on DRC noted in June 2020 that "Mai-Mai coalition and Twirwaneho implemented a strategy of targeted abductions, rapes and sometimes killings of women to prevent access to fields, effectively obstructing access to food".⁴²⁴

In a press release on 5 June 2020, OHCHR reported that "in South Kivu, at least 74 people have been killed since October [2019] and at least 36 women and children raped in a resurgence of ethnic-based violence between the Banyamulenge and the Bafuliro, Babembe, and Banyindu communities".⁴²⁵

In a report covering the period 17 March 2020 to 16 June 2020 the UN Secretary General noted that "Intercommunity violence contributed to an increase of sexual violence in South Kivu, Maniema and Tanganyika, where Twa majority militias perpetrated gang rapes of women, often while they were working in their fields".⁴²⁶

⁴²¹ Amnesty International, [The State of the World's Human Rights 2020/21](#), 7 April 2021, p. 139

⁴²² OHCHR, [1,300 civilians killed in the DRC in past eight months](#), 5 June 2020

⁴²³ UN Secretary General, [Conflict-related sexual violence, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 March 2021, para. 29

⁴²⁴ UN Security Council, [Letter dated 10 June 2021 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council](#), 10 June 2021, para. 147

⁴²⁵ OHCHR, [1,300 civilians killed in the DRC in past eight months](#), 5 June 2020

⁴²⁶ UN Secretary General, [Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 18 June 2020, para. 57

In its report covering the period 19 September to 1 December 2020 MONUSCO documented that “in Bijombo, internally displaced persons remained the target of opportunistic attacks by armed militias. Five direct attacks against internally displaced persons resulted in 8 civilians killed or wounded, mostly women, in addition to 18 cases of rape and sexual violence”.⁴²⁷ Additionally the same report noted that “meanwhile in Shabunda, there was a surge in violence, including sexual violence, by Raia Mutomboki groups”.⁴²⁸

Reporting on developments in South Kivu between 2 December 2020 and 18 March 2021, the UN Secretary-General report stated that “sexual violence escalated in northern Shabunda following confrontations on 24 December [2020] between Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki factions and the killing of two leaders, Mabala and Walike”.⁴²⁹

8.2.3. Non-state individuals

Beyond the more general information included under sections [6. Overview of the Security Situation including conflict-related human rights violations](#) and [8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#) no specific additional information was found amongst the sources consulted within the time frame for this report.

8.2.4. State protection availability

In a report covering the period 29 June to 25 September 2019 the UN Secretary General noted that “The reporting period also saw the investigation and prosecution of emblematic cases of crimes against humanity, including conflict-related sexual violence. [...] The Sheka trial in North Kivu and the preparation of the Kokodikoko hearings in South Kivu involved approximately 175 victims of conflict-related sexual violence, as well as other human rights violations perpetrated in Mwenga and Shabunda territories”.⁴³⁰

The U.S. Department of State’s annual report on human rights included information from MONUSCO which in January 2020 reported that:

The military court in Bukavu, South Kivu Province, convicted one FARDC soldier and one PNC officer on charges of rape. The soldier and officer were sentenced to 20 years in prison each. During the same hearing, five other FARDC soldiers were convicted of other human rights abuses and received prison sentences.⁴³¹

⁴²⁷ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), 30 November 2020, para. 15

⁴²⁸ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), 30 November 2020, para. 16

⁴²⁹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 21

⁴³⁰ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), 27 September 2019, para. 62

⁴³¹ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 6, Women

However, the U.S. Department of State also highlighted that “Most survivors of rape did not pursue formal legal action due to insufficient resources, lack of confidence in the justice system, family pressure, and fear of subjecting themselves to humiliation, reprisal, or both”.⁴³²

In the UN report covering the period 19 September to 1 December 2020, it was reported that “on 7 October, the Tribunal militaire de garnison of Bukavu sentenced two members of Raia Mutomboki Hamakombo to 20 years in prison each for crimes against humanity, including murder, rape, sexual slavery, torture and other inhumane acts committed in Kambale and Kanwe villages between 2016 and 2018”.⁴³³

Reporting on the same case, Reuters reported in November 2019 that “judges convicted Raia Mutomboki chief Frédéric Masudi Alimasi, who goes by the name Kokodikoko, along with two allies for murder, torture, enforced disappearances, sexual violence and enslavement committed over several months last year”.⁴³⁴

In the UN report covering the period 2 December 2020 to 18 March 2021, it was reported that “on 12 January [2021], the garrison military court of Bukavu sentenced Takungomo Mukambilwa Le Pouce, a deputy to the leader of Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki Charlequin, to 20 years in prison for crimes against humanity, including murder, rape, torture, sexual slavery and enforced disappearance, and to the payment of damages to victims, which is enforceable through the seizure of all of his property. The courts also ordered that the victims be enabled to return to their villages”.⁴³⁵

8.3. Ituri

See also information included under section [8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#).

8.3.1. Armed forces

The report by the UN Group of Experts on DRC noted in June 2021 that “members of the Democratic Republic of the Congo security forces deployed in Djugu and Irumu territories committed exactions, including conflict-related sexual violence, in particular against Bira and Lendu populations considered as affiliated to FPIC and CODECO factions”.⁴³⁶

Additionally, the above report noted that “several Lendu women who attempted return to their villages and fields were victims of sexual violence. [...] Four women were raped by FARDC members in two separate incidents between November and December 2020 as they returned to their respective villages, Kambutso and Ladile, to pick up food”.⁴³⁷

⁴³² U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 6, Women

⁴³³ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), 30 November 2020, para. 43

⁴³⁴ Reuters, [Congo court hands life sentence to warlord for murder, sexual violence](#), 19 November 2019

⁴³⁵ UN Secretary-General, [Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 18 March 2021, para. 27

⁴³⁶ UN Security Council, [Letter dated 10 June 2021 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council](#), 10 June 2021, para. 114

⁴³⁷ UN Security Council, [Letter dated 10 June 2021 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council](#), 10 June 2021, para. 117

8.3.2. Non-state armed groups

According to the UN, covering the period January to December 2020 “in Ituri, assailants based in Djugu, in particular elements of Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO), committed acts of sexual violence, including rape and sexual slavery, against multiple women and one man”.⁴³⁸ The U.S. Department of State’s 2020 annual report on human rights included information from MONUSCO which reported that:

MONUSCO’s Child Protection Section reported that more than 80 percent of women and girls separated from armed group the Patriotic Resistance Forces of Ituri Province reported being victims of sexual violence.⁴³⁹

On 16th September 2020 Radio Okapi reported that [unofficial translation] “five war-displaced women were raped in the space of five days in the village of Walu, in the Babelobe chiefdom, in the territory of Irumu (Ituri)” and that “these cases of sexual violence are attributed to unidentified armed men, who engage in numerous abuses in the area, including looting of property”.⁴⁴⁰

The UN Group of Experts on DRC noted in their report of June 2021 that “acts of conflict-related sexual violence by combatants of CODECO factions, while numerous throughout 2020 and 2021, remained largely unpunished. Typically, women and girls were raped or gang raped, either when carrying out daily subsistence activities, escaping attacks or when forcibly transporting assailants’ loot”⁴⁴¹ and that “in particular, Bon Temple combatants led by Tuwo committed gang rape, forced marriage and sexual slavery in gold-rich Banyali-Kilo”.⁴⁴²

8.3.3. Non-state individuals

Beyond the information included under sections [6. Overview of the Security Situation including conflict-related human rights violations](#) and [8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#) no specific additional information was found amongst the sources consulted within the time frame for this report.

8.3.4. State protection availability

In a report covering the period 28 September to 25 November 2019 the UN Secretary General noted that “following a trial in Ituri supported by MONUSCO, 55 defendants, including 1 FARDC soldier and 1 member of the national police, were convicted and sentenced to life

⁴³⁸ UN Secretary General, [Conflict-related sexual violence, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 March 2021, III Sexual violence in conflict affected settings. Democratic Republic of Congo, para. 29

⁴³⁹ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 1 G. Abuses in internal conflict

⁴⁴⁰ Radio Okapi, [RDC : 5 femmes violées lors d'une incursion d'hommes armés à Walu](#), 16 September 2020 [unofficial translation DRC: 5 women raped during an incursion of armed men in Walu]

⁴⁴¹ UN Security Council, [Letter dated 10 June 2021 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council](#), 10 June 2021 , para. 84

⁴⁴² UN Security Council, [Letter dated 10 June 2021 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council](#), 10 June 2021 , para. 85

imprisonment for crimes against humanity committed in the context of intercommunity violence in Djugu Territory between December 2017 and May 2018”.⁴⁴³

The U.S Department of State’s 2020 annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* noted that “the Agency for the Prevention and the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons (APLTP), the newly-established national coordinating body in April 2019, reported that 1,135 women were abducted by armed groups for sexual slavery in Ituri province and that local NGOs brought 142 cases before provincial courts; the government did not report any additional information about the status of these cases”.⁴⁴⁴

The U.S. Department of State’s 2020 annual human rights report highlighted that “On February 14 [2020], a military court in Bunia, Ituri Province, convicted three members of the Patriotic Resistance Forces of Ituri of war crimes for rape, looting, and participation in an insurrectional movement. The three were sentenced to 20 years in prison”.⁴⁴⁵

A UN report covering the period 19 September to 1 December 2020 reported that “on 10 November [2020], the Tribunal militaire de garnison in Ituri sentenced nine Mai-Mai to life imprisonment for war crimes related to attacks on Ebola response teams in Biakato and Lwemba between 15 September and 28 November 2019, which resulted in the killing of four people”.⁴⁴⁶

According to the UN report on MONUSCO’s activities covering the period 2 December 2020 to 18 March 2021 it was reported that “security issues had prevented the court [*Tribunal de grande instance de Bunia*] from addressing some of these cases for over two years” and that “the trials of 85 defendants, including 1 woman, began on 24 November 2020 and concluded on 26 January 2021; 62 were convicted, including 38 for sexual violence, and 23 were acquitted, including 1 woman”.⁴⁴⁷

9. Children affected by the conflict

9.1. Recruitment and use of child soldiers

General situation in the conflict areas of Eastern DRC

With regards to the issue of recruitment of children in conflict, the report covering January to December 2019 noted that “the recruitment and use of children affected 601 children (533 boys, 68 girls), all of whom were recruited and separated in 2019, 30 per cent of whom were under the age of 15 at the time of recruitment” and that “most cases were verified in North Kivu, followed by South Kivu, Ituri and the Kasais”.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴³ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 26 November 2019, para.41

⁴⁴⁴ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), June 2020

⁴⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 1 G. Abuses in internal conflict

⁴⁴⁶ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), 30 November 2020, para. 43

⁴⁴⁷ UN Secretary-General, [Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 18 March 2021, para. 48

⁴⁴⁸ UN Security Council, [Children and Armed Conflict](#), 9 June 2020, para. 55

In July 2020, UNICEF highlighted that “forced displacement continues to separate children from their families, boys and girls remain at risk of being recruited by armed groups and children, notably girls, are too often victims of different forms of gender-based violence (GBV)”.⁴⁴⁹

In its annual report covering 2020, Amnesty International reported that “The closure of schools increased the risk for many children of recruitment into armed groups, as well as to sexual exploitation, early marriage and child labour in mines”.⁴⁵⁰

The US Department of State’s 2020 Trafficking in Persons report noted that:

The government convicted four traffickers for recruitment of child soldiers and sexual slavery, compared with convicting four traffickers for recruitment of child soldiers in 2018. Of these, the government convicted one former FARDC colonel to life imprisonment for child soldier recruitment, among other crimes. It also convicted a leader of an armed group and two militia members for crimes against humanity, including sexual slavery; the government sentenced the three men to 15 years’ to life imprisonment, and the judge found the government liable for failing to take measures to prevent the crimes and ordered the state to pay reparations to more than 300 victims of sexual slavery.⁴⁵¹

Furthermore, the US Department of State’s 2020 Human Rights Report noted that “Mai Mai Mazembe and NDC-R were the greatest perpetrators of child abductions”.⁴⁵²

In the report covering 19 September to 1 December 2020, the UN Secretary General reported that “17 children were separated from armed groups and handed over to child protection partners for psychosocial support and reunification with their families”.⁴⁵³

Additionally, the same report noted that “in addition, two commanders of armed groups (Mai-Mai Apa Na PaleMandjosa and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale-Kamutu) in Tanganyika signed a unilateral declaration and road map to end child recruitment. To date, 35 armed groups have made such commitments to end and prevent child recruitment since July 2018. A total of 2,121 children, including 304 girls, have been voluntarily released by commanders of armed groups”.⁴⁵⁴

Commenting on the issue of child recruitment, the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict reported in November 2020 that:

Recruitment and use, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and the abduction of children were most prevalent. While armed groups remain the main perpetrators (95% of violations), sexual violence, and killing and maiming by government forces are a serious concern. In particular, sexual violence against children by Government security forces continues to be a

⁴⁴⁹ UNICEF, [Humanitarian Situation Report No. 07](#), July 2020

⁴⁵⁰ Amnesty International, [The State of the World’s Human Rights 2020/21](#), 7 April 2021, p. 139

⁴⁵¹ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), June 2020

⁴⁵² U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 1 G. Abuses in internal conflict

⁴⁵³ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), 30 November 2020, para. 48

⁴⁵⁴ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), 30 November 2020, para. 52

significant and persistent issue despite the action plan signed with the United Nations in 2012.⁴⁵⁵

According to the UN Report covering children and conflict in the period from January to December 2020 and in relation to the DRC, it was noted that:

The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 788 children (687 boys, 101 girls), all of whom were recruited, used and separated in 2020. Perpetrators were Mai-Mai Mazembe (209), Nyatura (109), Alliance des forces de résistance congolaises (101), Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-Rénové) (66), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (62), Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) (34), Raia Mutomboki (34), Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) (29) and other armed groups (143). [...] Fifty girls were subjected to sexual violence, and 240 children were used as combatants and 456 in support roles. In addition, the recruitment and use of 1,164 children (747 boys, 417 girls) by armed groups (1,162) (including Kamuina Nsapu (1,047) and Mai-Mai Mazembe (30)) and the armed forces (2) were verified at a later date.⁴⁵⁶

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 19 March and 18 June 2021, the situation was described as follows:

MONUSCO recorded 133 children, including 7 girls, recruited or used in conflict during the reporting period. While 17 of the newly recorded children, comprising 13 boys and 4 girls, are still associated with armed groups, 116 others escaped or were separated, mainly from Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (29 boys and 1 girl), Nyatura (23 boys), Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki (15 boys and 5 girls) and Mai-Mai Mazembe (16 boys). Of the 133 children, 31 were new recruits and 2 were voluntarily released by armed groups.⁴⁵⁷

9.1.1. Government forces

According to MONUSCO's reporting in December 2020, "in November 2017, the FARDC were removed from the UN Secretary-General's blacklist for child recruitment. To date, the UN Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict in the DRC has not documented any cases of child recruitment and use attributable to the FARDC; all cases are committed exclusively by armed groups operating in eastern DRC. Nevertheless, to date, the FARDC remain on the UN blacklist for sexual violence against children".⁴⁵⁸

In the UN Report covering the period January to December 2020, it was reported that "one boy was recruited by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to spy on Mai-Mai elements"⁴⁵⁹ and in another incident "two boys were used by the armed forces as servants for one year".⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁵ UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, [Democratic Republic of the Congo: Opportunities to Protect Conflict-Affected Children and Progress in Accountability, yet Significant Challenges Remain](#), 17 November 2020

⁴⁵⁶ UN Security Council, [Children and Armed Conflict](#), 6 May 2021, para. 48

⁴⁵⁷ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 June 2021, para. 64

⁴⁵⁸ UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo, [North Kivu: MONUSCO trains Congolese security forces and services to protect children in armed conflict](#), 19 December 2020

⁴⁵⁹ UN Security Council, [Children and Armed Conflict](#), 6 May 2021, para. 48

⁴⁶⁰ UN Security Council, [Children and Armed Conflict](#), 6 May 2021, para. 49

9.1.1.1. North Kivu

No information was specifically found on North Kivu amongst the sources consulted within the timeframe for this report.

9.1.1.2. South Kivu

No information was specifically found on South Kivu amongst the sources consulted within the timeframe for this report.

9.1.1.3. Ituri

No information was specifically found on Ituri amongst the sources consulted within the timeframe for this report.

9.1.2. Non-state armed groups

General situation in the conflict areas of Eastern DRC

In October 2019 MONUSCO published a report focusing on child recruitment and use of children between 2014 and 2017 by armed groups in the DRC, including those operating in the two Kivus and Ituri provinces. Whilst the report's timeline is outside of the timeframe for this particular report, its content might still be of relevance – MONUSCO, [*“Our Strength Is In Our Youth”: Child Recruitment and Use by Armed Groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2014-2017*](#), 16 October 2019.

In a report covering the period 29 June to 25 September 2019 the UN Secretary General noted that “During July and August [2019], MONUSCO [...] 234 children (31 girls, 203 boys) who had escaped or been separated from armed groups. Children were mainly separated from Kamuina Nsapu (71) in the Kasais, Twa militia (36) in Tanganyika Province, Mai-Mai Malaika (21) in Maniema Province and Mai-Mai armed groups (29) in South Kivu”.⁴⁶¹

The same report noted further that “MONUSCO [...] facilitated the release of 34 children associated with armed groups before handing them over to national child protection counterparts”.⁴⁶²

In the report covering the period 28 September to 25 November 2019 the UN Secretary General noted that “The Mission’s efforts to engage with armed groups on the release of children has continued to produce positive results. Over the past year, MONUSCO engaged with 16 commanders of armed groups, which resulted in the release of 973 children, 136 of whom were girls. Later, eight of the groups formally surrendered, which demonstrates that communication with such groups about children’s rights can be a valuable entry point for their eventual demobilization”.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶¹ UN Security Council, [*Report of the Secretary General United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo*](#), 27 September 2019, VIII. Sexual violence, para. 59

⁴⁶² UN Security Council, [*Report of the Secretary General United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo*](#), 27 September 2019, para. 50

⁴⁶³ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 26 November 2019, para. 43

During the report period covering 26 November 2019 to 16 March 2020 the UN Secretary General reported that “MONUSCO demobilized 66 Congolese former combatants. A total of 72 children associated with the armed forces or armed groups were received and handed over to child protection partners, to be reunited with their families eventually”.⁴⁶⁴ The same report further noted “New recruitment by armed groups has decreased by 60 per cent over the past two years”.⁴⁶⁵

The U.S. Department of State’s annual human rights report covering 2020 noted that “Mai Mai Mazembe and NDC-R were the greatest perpetrators of child abductions”.⁴⁶⁶

The same report highlighted that “the Mission’s (MONUSCO) efforts to negotiate the release of children from armed groups continued to be successful. In December 2019, the Mission engaged with Mai-Mai Makanaki and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale in Tanganyika Province, resulting in unilateral declarations and the adoption of road maps by those armed groups to end child recruitment”.⁴⁶⁷

Covering the period 17 June to 18 September 2020, the UN reported that MONUSCO “recorded 185 children (151 boys and 34 girls) who escaped or were separated from armed groups, mostly from Mai-Mai Mazembe and NDC-R. Seven children were abducted and newly recruited to armed groups across the country”.⁴⁶⁸

Between the period from 2 December 2020 to 18 March 2021, MONUSCO reported that:

On 2 February, MONUSCO facilitated the signing by the NDC-R Bwira faction of a unilateral declaration to end and prevent child recruitment and other grave violations against children. The leaders of Mouvement d’action pour le changement, Mai-Mai Ilunga and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale Makilo also signed up to such commitments. In total, 39 armed groups have signed up to such commitments since July 2018, resulting in the voluntary release of 2,167 children, including 308 girls. Thirteen of those groups have not recorded any new child rights violations for one year.⁴⁶⁹

Furthermore, “the Mission also separated 63 children (62 boys and 1 girl) from armed groups and transferred them to child protection partners for psychosocial support and family reunification”.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁴ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 18 March 2020, para. 49

⁴⁶⁵ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 18 March 2020, para. 43

⁴⁶⁶ U.S. Department of State, [*2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 30 March 2021, Section 1 G., Abuses in internal conflict

⁴⁶⁷ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 18 March 2020, para. 51

⁴⁶⁸ UN Secretary General, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 21 September 2020, para. 54

⁴⁶⁹ UN Secretary-General, [*Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 18 March 2021, para. 55

⁴⁷⁰ UN Secretary-General, [*Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 18 March 2021, para. 51

Additionally the same report highlighted that “of the children being used in conflict, 46 have been voluntarily released by armed groups leaders who have signed a unilateral commitment to end and prevent child recruitment and other grave violations”.⁴⁷¹

The June 2021 report by the UN Group of Experts on DRC notes that “Force patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo (FPIC) comprised several women and used children aged 15 years and above as combatants”.⁴⁷²

9.1.2.1. North Kivu

In the report dated 19 October 2020 covering the period from 1 January 2018 to 31 March 2020, the UN Secretary General noted that “children were mainly vulnerable to recruitment and use by community-based self-defence groups, such as Nyatura and Mai-Mai Mazembe, who increasingly recruited children in response to threats posed by other groups”.⁴⁷³

The U.S. Department of State’s annual report on human rights reported that in 2020, “According to the United Nations, at least 952 children were separated from IAGs during the first six months of the year [2020]. The majority came from the Mai Mai Mazembe militia in North Kivu”.⁴⁷⁴

Accordingly, during the reporting period covering 17 June to 18 September 2020 it was noted that:

The commanders of Apa Na Pale-Bilenge, an armed group active in Tanganyika, and of Nyatura Jean-Marie, active in North Kivu, signed unilateral declarations to end and prevent child recruitment and other grave violations of children’s rights. The two agreements led to the voluntary release of seven children from Apa Na PaleBilenge and 31 children from Nyatura Jean-Marie. As of August 2020, a total of 33 armed groups had signed such commitments, leading to the voluntarily release of 2,007 children.⁴⁷⁵

The UN Group of Experts letter dated 10th June 2021 noted that “several armed groups in the area [North Kivu], including both NDC-R factions and CMC/FDP, continued to use children as porters for heavy and light weapons and as combatants”.⁴⁷⁶

9.1.2.2. South Kivu

With regards to child recruitment in South Kivu the UN Secretary General noted in its report covering the period 1 January 2018 to 31 March 2020 that:

⁴⁷¹ UN Secretary-General, [*Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 18 March 2021, para. 54

⁴⁷² UN Security Council, [*Letter dated 10 June 2021 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council*](#), 10 June 2021, para. 103

⁴⁷³ UN Security Council, [*Report of the Secretary General Children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 19 October 2020, para.6

⁴⁷⁴ U.S. Department of State, [*2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 30 March 2021, Section 1. G, Abuses in internal conflict

⁴⁷⁵ UN Security Council, [*United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General*](#), 21 September 2020, para. 55

⁴⁷⁶ UN Security Council, [*Letter dated 10 June 2021 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council*](#), 10 June 2021, para. 53

All parties recruited and used children. In Fizi and Uvira territories, children were also recruited by Mai-Mai groups to protect local communities from elements of the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) and Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi-Tabara, both Burundian armed groups opposing the Burundian government.[...] In December 2019, FARDC launched operations against CNRD, resulting in the surrender of 360 combatants with 1,200 dependants, including 384 children, who were held in Nyamunyuni camp, Kabare territory, managed by FARDC.⁴⁷⁷

The UN Secretary General noted in the report covering the period 19 September to 1 December 2020 that “184 children (38 girls and 146 boys) formerly associated with armed groups escaped or were separated, among whom 81, including [...] 25 associated with Mai-Mai Mtetezi in the Hauts Plateaux of South Kivu, were voluntarily released by commanders who committed themselves to protecting children”.⁴⁷⁸

The UN Group of Experts on DRC noted in their report in June 2021 that:

Both the Mai-Mai coalition and Twirwaneho recruited and used children as young as 12 years of age, including as combatants or escorts, or to man checkpoints or perform domestic tasks. Some carried weapons. One Babembe rape victim saw Twirwaneho children above 16 years of age rape other women. A Banyamulenge internally displaced person described that, during a Mai-Mai attack on her village, children above 15 years of age had been used to loot cows and burn houses.⁴⁷⁹

9.1.2.3. Ituri

According to the UN Secretary General report covering the period 1 January 2018 to 31 March 2020 “in Irumu territory, the political process to demobilize the Force de résistance patriotique de l’Ituri (FRPI) that started in 2018 resulted in the signing of a peace agreement between FRPI and the Government in February 2020. This led to a decrease in the rape, killing and recruitment of children by FRPI. However, FRPI leadership did not agree to present all troops for age verification, making it impossible to screen and release the 250 children estimated to be present in their ranks at the time”.⁴⁸⁰

The U.S. Department of State’s annual human rights report covering 2020 noted that “As of June 30 [2020], the United Nations reported that Djugu-based militias abducted at least 201 civilians”.⁴⁸¹

The Group of Experts on the DRC reported in its report covering 25 April 2020 to 19 November 2020:

URDPC/CODECO and ALC/CODECO used children during the reporting period, a sanctionable act under paragraph 7 (d) of resolution 2293 (2016), reaffirmed by paragraph 2 of resolution

⁴⁷⁷ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General Children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 19 October 2020, para. 10

⁴⁷⁸ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), 30 November 2020, para. 52

⁴⁷⁹ UN Security Council, [Letter dated 10 June 2021 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council](#), 10 June 2021, para. 151

⁴⁸⁰ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General Children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 19 October 2020, para. 12

⁴⁸¹ U.S. Department of State, [2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 30 March 2021, Section 1 G., Abuses in internal conflict

2528 (2020). The evidence demonstrates the presence of children within URDPC/CODECO,³⁶ some carrying AK-type assault rifles, ammunition and bladed weapons [...]

One source with first-hand knowledge of the group said that URDPC/CODECO used children as combatants. A video recording of the entry of ALC/CODECO into Bunia on 4 September 2020 shows children among the combatants [...]

URDPC/CODECO leadership denied any participation of children in combat or in URDPC/CODECO and ALC/CODECO activities.⁴⁸²

In a press release on 26th April 2021 regarding children and violence in Ituri, UNICEF reported that “there have been nearly 175 grave violations since January 2021, including cases of recruitment of children into armed groups, killings and maiming of children, sexual violence and attacks on schools and hospitals”.⁴⁸³

9.2. Conflict-related violence directed against children

Note also the information included in section [8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#) and [9.1. Recruitment and use of child soldiers](#).

General situation in the conflict areas of Eastern DRC

Save the Children report on children and conflict noted that “the highest number of verified violations in 2019 were in DRC where 249 cases were reported – one-third of the global total. All of these involved girls, some of whom were used for sexual slavery”.⁴⁸⁴

In a press release from MONUSCO, the Mission reported that “the independent assessment found that in the months of November and December [2019] alone, over 260 civilians, mainly women and children, were killed, by presumed ADF combatants in brutal attacks, mostly at night”.⁴⁸⁵

The UN Group of Experts noted that in an attack on 5 December 2019 “girls were forced to become ADF/NALU combatants’ “wives”.⁴⁸⁶

In the report covering the period January to December 2019, UN documented that:

The perpetration of sexual violence affecting 249 girls was attributed to government forces (126) (armed forces (97), national police (25), Agence nationale de renseignements (4)); and armed groups (123) (Bantu and Twa militias (23 each), Raia Mutomboki (19), Nyatura (12), other armed groups (46)). The incidents occurred in North Kivu (64), South Kivu (50).⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸² UN Security Council, [Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 23 December 2020, para. 50

⁴⁸³ UNICEF, [Recent surge in violence in DRC’s Ituri Province Worsening Already Desperate Situation](#), 26 April 2021

⁴⁸⁴ Save the Children, [Killed and Maimed: A Generation of Violations Against Children In Conflict](#), 20 November 2020, p. 14

⁴⁸⁵ MONUSCO News, [Independent Assessment Of MONUSCO’s Response To Recent Attacks Against Civilians In Béni Area, DRC](#), 22 January 2020

⁴⁸⁶ UN Security Council, [Letter dated 2 June 2020 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council](#), 2 June 2020, para. 140

⁴⁸⁷ UN Security Council, [Children and Armed Conflict](#), 9 June 2020, para.59

According to UNICEF “91 children were killed, 27 were maimed and 13 were victims of sexual violence between January and June 2020. [...] attacks against more than 60 schools have left around 45,000 children out of the classroom”.⁴⁸⁸

Additionally, UNICEF noted in another report that “in the first half of 2020, as violence intensified in Ituri and North and South Kivu provinces, severe violations against children, including killings and maiming, recruitment into armed groups, and attacks against schools and hospitals increased by 16 %”.⁴⁸⁹

The UN Secretary General report covering the period 1 January 2018 to 31 March 2020 noted that “between 11 and 17 September 2019, in Djugu territory, Ituri, CODECO killed 10 children between the ages of 3 and 17, three of whom were decapitated”.⁴⁹⁰

The same report noted that “in the first quarter of 2020, there were 53 children killed (37) and maimed (26)”.⁴⁹¹

The UN Group of Experts on DRC noted in its report that “in May 2020, Bon Temple combatants abducted a 13-year-old Hema girl who was fetching water near Itendeyi, Banyali-Kilo. [...]. In October or November 2020, eight combatants of “General Tuwo” ambushed two young Hema women collecting wood on Dii Hill, Walendu Djatsi sector”.⁴⁹²

According to the same report “on 30 November 2020, in a signature attack, five CODECO combatants killed and maimed four women and six children under 10 years”.⁴⁹³

In an earlier report by the UN Secretary General covering the period 17 June to 18 September 2020, it was noted that:

MONUSCO verified 242 grave violations against children in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, Tanganyika, Kasai and Kasai Central. A total of 23 children (20 boys and 3 girls) were reportedly killed or maimed, including 15 killed by Djugu-based assailants in Djugu and Mahagi territories. Nine girls were raped or subjected to other forms of sexual violence in North Kivu and South Kivu.⁴⁹⁴

The UN Secretary-General report covering the period from 2 December 2020 to 18 March 2021 noted that “MONUSCO verified 217 grave violations against 215 children (35 girls and 180 boys), representing an increase of 13 per cent compared with the previous reporting

⁴⁸⁸ UNICEF, [Unrelenting violence continues to impact children in Ituri, Eastern DRC](#), 5 October 2020

⁴⁸⁹ UNICEF, [Country Office Annual Report 2020](#),

⁴⁹⁰ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General Children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 19 October 2020, para. 32

⁴⁹¹ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General Children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 19 October 2020, para. 30

⁴⁹² UN Security Council, [Letter dated 10 June 2021 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council](#), 10 June 2021, para. 86

⁴⁹³ UN Security Council, [Letter dated 10 June 2021 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council](#), 10 June 2021, para. 87

⁴⁹⁴ UN Secretary General, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 21 September 2020, para. 54

period. A total of 16 children (3 girls and 13 boys) were killed or maimed. Twenty girls were raped or subjected to other forms of sexual violence”.⁴⁹⁵

The UN report covering the period January to December 2020 noted that:

The United Nations verified the killing (220) and maiming (143) of 363 children (217 boys, 146 girls), mostly attributed to armed groups (294): CODECO (140), NDC-Rénové (27), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) (26), Nyatura (23), unidentified Mai-Mai groups (16), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (14) and other armed groups (48). Government forces were responsible for 59 child casualties (armed forces (43) and the national police (16)), while another 10 casualties resulted from landmines and explosive remnants of war.⁴⁹⁶[...] The United Nations verified that 396 girls and 2 boys were subjected to sexual violence by armed groups (261) (Nyatura (50), NDC-Rénové (40), CODECO (31), Mai-Mai Mazembe (20), other groups (120)) and by government forces (137) (armed forces (92), national police (41), Agence nationale de renseignements (4)).⁴⁹⁷

The Kivu Security Tracker recorded and documented that “unidentified armed men abducted and raped three girls near Kibaya village in Rutshuru territory”.⁴⁹⁸

Referring to human rights violations throughout 2020 as documented and confirmed by the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO), its analysis for the year found:

In 2020, MONUSCO’s Child Protection Section documented and verified 3,470 grave violations of the rights of the child in the context of armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which represents a decrease compared to 2019 (3,831 violations).

In total, 3,237 of the grave violations of the rights of the child documented in 2020 (namely 93%) are attributable to armed groups and militias and 223 violations (namely 7%) were committed by State agents, mainly FARDC soldiers (159 violations) and PNC agents (59 violations).

Among the armed groups and militias, the main perpetrators of the violations documented in 2020 are the Mayi-Mayi Mazembe (635 abuses), Nyatura (422 abuses), Djugu-based armed assailants (365 abuses), Mayi-Mayi Apa na Pale (324 abuses) and NDC-R (271 abuses).

These violations were documented in the provinces of North Kivu (1,934), Ituri (526), South Kivu (356), Tanganyika (341), Kasai Region (252), Maniema (46) and Haut-Katanga (14).⁴⁹⁹

The same source further highlighted:

The most documented conflict-related violation is the recruitment of children. In 2020, at least 2,101 children (including 279 girls and 1,822 boys) were separated from armed groups and militias. Among the armed groups and militias, the main perpetrators of recruitment and use of children are the Mayi-Mayi Mazembe (503 children), Nyatura (294), Mayi-Mayi Apa na Pale (249), NDC-R (159), AFRC (135), Kamwina Nsapu (126), Rayia Mutomboki (101), FDLR FOCA (92) and Djugu-based armed assailants (86). The provinces most affected by the recruitment of children are North Kivu (1,306), Tanganyika (251), South Kivu (234), the Kasai region (179), Ituri (130) and Maniema (one).⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁵ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 18 March 2021, para. 54

⁴⁹⁶ UN Security Council, [Children and Armed Conflict](#), 6 May 2021, para. 51

⁴⁹⁷ UN Security Council, [Children and Armed Conflict](#), 6 May 2021, para. 52

⁴⁹⁸ Kivu Security Tracker, [Unknown Abduction](#), 7 January 2021

⁴⁹⁹ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, paras. 58 and 59

⁵⁰⁰ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, para. 60

The report also noted the killing and maiming of children:

At least 363 children were killed (220) or maimed (143) in 2020. Armed groups are responsible for 304 of these violations and State agents for 54, with Djugu-based armed assailants (140) and FARDC soldiers (43) as the main perpetrators. The causes of death were ethnically-motivated raids on villages (146), crossfire between the FARDC and armed groups (25), clashes between armed groups (23), and cases where the victims were killed during looting (13), by explosive remnants of war (seven) and in other gunshot incidents (six). These cases were mainly documented in the provinces of Ituri (165), North-Kivu (136), Tanganyika (20), South-Kivu (17), Maniema (14) and the Kasai region (11).⁵⁰¹

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 19 March and 18 June 2021, the situation was described as follows:

From March to April [2021], MONUSCO verified 281 grave violations against children, representing an increase of 27.6 per cent compared with the previous reporting period. A total of 51 children, including 11 girls, were killed or maimed. Twenty-three of these children were killed by armed groups during targeted attacks.⁵⁰²

9.2.1. Displacement of children

According to a report by UNICEF, "by November 2020, official figures showed there were around 5,2 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in DRC, mostly in the four eastern provinces of North and South Kivu, Ituri and Tanganyika. Just over 3 million of the IDPs are children, including nearly half a million under the age of 5".⁵⁰³

9.2.1.1. North Kivu

No specific information in relation to North Kivu was found amongst the sources consulted within the time frame for this report.

9.2.1.2. South Kivu

No specific information in relation to South Kivu was found amongst the sources consulted within the time frame for this report.

9.2.1.3. Ituri

UNICEF reported in February 2021 that "in the eastern province of Ituri alone, almost a million children have been forced from their homes by conflict".⁵⁰⁴

In another press release, UNICEF reported in June 2021 that "the populations of two small towns in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been forced to flee their

⁵⁰¹ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, para. 63

⁵⁰² UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 June 2021, para. 63

⁵⁰³ UNICEF, [Fear and Flight: An Uprooted Generation of Children at Risk in Democratic Republic of Congo](#), February 2021, p. 9

⁵⁰⁴ UNICEF, [Fear and displacement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 19 February 2021

homes as violence by armed groups in the region continues to exact a grave toll on children and families. [...] The recent attacks on the towns of Boga and Tchabi in Ituri Province have been devastating for children, many of whom witnessed brutal acts of violence by assailants using machetes and heavy weapons”.⁵⁰⁵

9.2.2. Access to education

See also information included under section [12.3.4. Access to education](#) [in Ituri for IDPs].

In its 2020 annual human rights report, Amnesty International noted that “the government closed schools, universities and other educational institutions on 19 March [2020] as part of its COVID-19 measures, affecting around 27 million students. [...]. Schools were re-opened on 10 August [2020]. Armed conflicts also disrupted the education of thousands of children, especially in the east”.⁵⁰⁶

Basing its analysis on COI compiled by a range of sources as well as on a review of recent rapid needs assessments undertaken in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika, the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) reported in October 2020:

According to incidents recorded in multi-sectoral evaluations conducted by humanitarian partners in South Kivu, Ituri and Tanganyika in the first half of 2020, attacks targeting schools are common and have resulted in the destruction of infrastructure and, in some cases, human casualties (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 09/2020; COOPI 22/06/2020 Unknown/OCHA 23/04/2020; Unknown/OCHA 06/2020). On 31 August [2020] unidentified armed men attacked and raped female students at an examination centre hosting 35 final year students, 16 boys and 16 girls in Isiro town in Haut-Uélé province the night before exams (The Defense Post 31/08/2020). The students went on to take their exams the next day (BBC 01/09/2020). Also on 31 August [2020] in South Kivu province, about 700 students and their teachers fled after fighting near an exam centre. On 27 August [2020], at least two students and one teacher were reported to have been killed in Masisi area of North Kivu province following a confrontation between security forces and an armed group near an exam centre. The students were killed while sitting the second day of the National Primary End-of-Studies Test in Ngoyi Primary School (UNICEF 28/8/2020). In June 2020, 13 children were killed by arrows during armed attacks in the town of Ngombe Mwana.⁵⁰⁷

The UN report covering the period January to December 2020 notes that “the United Nations verified 145 attacks on schools (101) and hospitals (44) and on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals in Ituri (83), North Kivu (33), South Kivu (15) and other provinces (14), mostly attributed to armed groups.[...] Seventeen attacks were attributed to the armed forces”.⁵⁰⁸

Referring to human rights violations throughout 2020 as documented and confirmed by the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO), its analysis for the year found:

A total of 101 attacks on schools were verified, affecting around 24,900 students, which is five times more attacks on schools compared to 2019 (20 attacks). More than half of these attacks

⁵⁰⁵ UNICEF, [Grave consequences for children in eastern DRC after armed violence causes population displacement of two towns](#), 24 June 2021

⁵⁰⁶ Amnesty International, [The State of the World's Human Rights 2020/21](#), 7 April 2021, p. 139

⁵⁰⁷ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Education & Child Protection Challenges in Eastern DRC: Impact of COVID-19, Conflict and Policy Reform](#), October 2020, p. 3/4

⁵⁰⁸ UN Security Council, [Children and Armed Conflict](#), 6 May 2021, para. 53

are attributable to Djugu-based armed assailants (53), 38 to other armed groups and 10 to FARDC soldiers.⁵⁰⁹

In its infographic on North Kivu and Ituri, UNOCHA noted in March 2021 under “Other effects of the crisis” in relation to education that “40 schools [were] destroyed” and “509 657 Children deprived of education” and on health that “13 Medical Facilities [were] attacked”.⁵¹⁰

9.2.2.1. North Kivu

The UN report covering the period 29 June to 25 September 2019 noted that “up to 25 schools remain closed in Masisi territory owing to insecurity, leaving approximately 3,000 students without access to education”.⁵¹¹

According to the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack 2020 Report covering the period of 2017 to 2019 “local media reported that on October 1, 2019, armed assailants attacked school children en route to school and tortured them, in Limbeke-Mamove, Beni territory, North Kivu province”.⁵¹²

On 29th August 2020 Al Jazeera reported that “at least two students and a teacher have been killed and several other teachers kidnapped after a primary school holding exams was attacked by unidentified gunmen in North Kivu”.⁵¹³

UN report covering the period January to December 2020 notes that “five schools were used by the armed forces in North Kivu (4) and Tanganyika (1) for up to four months for military operations and subsequently vacated”.⁵¹⁴

9.2.2.2. South Kivu

Very limited information was found specific to South Kivu within the timeframe of this report and amongst the sources consulted.

In October 2019, UNICEF documented that as a result of conflict outbreak in South Kivu “19,633 children were directly affected by the destruction or occupation of their schools or child protection facilities”.⁵¹⁵

9.2.2.3. Ituri

⁵⁰⁹ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, para. 64

⁵¹⁰ UNOCHA, [Deterioration of the humanitarian situation: Beni, Mambasa and Irumu Territories](#), 2 March 2021

⁵¹¹ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), 27 September 2019, III. Security situation, para 20

⁵¹² Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), [Education Under Attack 2020](#), p. 133

⁵¹³ Al Jazeera, [Two students, teacher killed in DR Congo school attack](#), 29 August 2020

⁵¹⁴ UN Security Council, [Children and Armed Conflict](#), 6 May 2021, para. 54

⁵¹⁵ UNICEF, [Democratic Republic of the Congo Humanitarian Situation Report No. 10](#), October 2019

UNICEF reported in September 2019 that “26,000 children, of which 13,500 girls, have been identified without access to education as a result of the Djugu crisis, Ituri province”.⁵¹⁶

In an information note covering the period between 25 September and 2 October 2019, UNOCHA noted that [unofficial translation] “In Mahagi and Djugu territories, 34 schools have been occupied by more than 4,340 displaced people since June [2019]. It is estimated that more than 10,000 students are affected by this situation. More than 290 classrooms are used as shelters for the displaced at night. As a result, students are deprived of more than 4,070 desks, which have been completely destroyed. In addition, about 350 latrines are out of order. The humanitarian community has sent an advocacy note to the provincial authorities to address this problem”.⁵¹⁷

In an information note covering the period between 5 to 12 November 2019, UNOCHA noted that :

The October [2019] report of the child protection sub-cluster paints a bleak picture of the infrastructure for children in Ituri Province. According to the report, 13 schools are occupied by the army and police, affecting 3,875 children. There are also 45 allegations of schools being attacked, affecting 10,743 children. In addition, two "child-friendly spaces" are occupied and five others were attacked in the health zones of Linga, Jiba, Rethy, Fataki et Drodoro.⁵¹⁸

The UN Secretary General report covering the period 17 March 2020 to 16 June 2020 noted that “In Ituri, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) received more than 100 allegations of serious child rights violations, such as rape, killing and maiming, attacks on schools as well as on health centres, during which large stocks of vaccines and parts of the cold chain were destroyed”.⁵¹⁹

The UN report covering the period January to December 2020 noted that “CODECO deliberately destroyed 53 schools during attacks in Ituri”.⁵²⁰

10. Public Health

10.1. COVID-19 in the DRC

See also information included in section [7. Human Rights Situation – Civil and Political Rights, 8. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence \(SGBV\)](#).

Overview of cases and government response

In its Humanitarian Response Plan for 2021 published in January 2021, UNOCHA stated that [unofficial translation] “The state of health emergency declared on 19 March 2020 due to the COVID-19 epidemic was lifted on 21 July [2020]. A national curfew was introduced on 18

⁵¹⁶ UNICEF, [Democratic Republic of the Congo Humanitarian Situation Report No. 10](#), September 2019

⁵¹⁷ UNOCHA, [Note d’informations humanitaires pour les provinces du Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, de l’Ituri et la Tshopo](#), 5 October 2019, p.1 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁵¹⁸ UNOCHA, [Note d’informations humanitaires pour les provinces du Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, de l’Ituri et la Tshopo](#), 15 November 2019, p. 5 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁵¹⁹ UN Security Council, [Report of the Secretary General United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 18 June 2020, para. 24

⁵²⁰ UN Security Council, [Children and Armed Conflict](#), 6 May 2021, para. 53

December 2020 and was still in force as of January 2021”.⁵²¹

Amnesty International provided the following summary with regards to COVID-19 developments and measures in 2020:

[...] Thousands of armed group combatants, who surrendered their weapons early in the year in North Kivu, Ituri, South Kivu and Tanganyika provinces, were left without shelter, food or medical care and many rejoined their groups. The government’s focus on controlling COVID-19 and other diseases diverted its attention from disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts. On 18 March, the President announced measures to control the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, including movement restrictions, border closures and a ban on gatherings of more than 20 people. On 24 March, the President announced a 30-day state of emergency which was extended on 23 April and confirmed by the Constitutional Court and Parliament. On 22 July, it was lifted following a slowdown in late June in COVID-19 cases and deaths, and restrictions were lifted in phases. [...]

RIGHT TO HEALTH

The COVID-19 pandemic put immense pressure on an already underfunded and overstretched health system, and on poorly paid health workers who were also responding to Ebola, measles and cholera epidemics. In September, the US government, via USAID, donated 50 new ventilators to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) government to boost the country’s fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Confirmed COVID-19 cases and related deaths reached 18,153 and 599 respectively by the end of the year. By June, the COVID-19 infection rate had decreased but the 10th Ebola outbreak, which began in 2018, had affected at least 3,470 people and left some 2,287 dead, while the measles outbreak had killed around 6,000 people. Prison conditions Overcrowding continued to be one of the biggest concerns in prisons and was worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. DRC prisons were among the most overcrowded in the world, with some facilities holding more than 300% over their intended capacity. Some prisoners went for days without food and others did not receive necessary medical attention, resulting in dozens of deaths. Twenty-five inmates died in Makala prison in the capital, Kinshasa, from starvation and lack of medicine at the beginning of the year. In April, the government addressed the risk of COVID-19 infection in prisons by releasing at least 2,000 inmates. At the end of that month, 43 prisoners tested positive for COVID-19 at the Ndolo military prison in Kinshasa.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The government closed schools, universities and other educational institutions on 19 March as part of its COVID-19 measures, affecting around 27 million students. The closure of schools increased the risk for many children of recruitment into armed groups, as well as to sexual exploitation, early marriage and child labour in mines. Schools were re-opened on 10 August. [...]

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

COVID-19-related lockdowns and other restrictions had an adverse impact on low income households although the government took measures to alleviate hardship by, for instance, providing some essential services like water and electricity for a two-month period. Such households in urban and rural areas, and in the border regions, lost key sources of income due to the decline in demand for informal economy workers and those involved in cross-border trading. [...]

EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

Following a ban on large public gatherings under COVID-19 restrictions, security forces used excessive force to disperse peaceful protests. On 9 July, mass protests took place in several cities against the appointment of the new Electoral Commission President. The police

⁵²¹ UNOCHA, [*Plan de Réponse Humanitaire, République Démocratique du Congo*](#), January 2021, p. 8 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

responded to the largely peaceful demonstrations with excessive force, killing at least one protester in Kinshasa and two others in Lubumbashi city. Many more were injured.⁵²²

Human Rights Watch similarly noted in 2020:

[...] Covid-19 Congolese health officials confirmed more than 11,500 Covid-19 cases across 22 provinces as of November 7, 2020, with 315 deaths. However, the number of cases is likely higher given the limited testing capacity. Between March 24 and August 15, the Congolese government imposed state of emergency measures to curb the spread of the virus. Borders were shut, large gatherings were banned, and schools, restaurants, bars, and places of worship were closed. School closures affected about 19 million children. On March 30, the police killed at least 3 people and wounded 11 others, according to a UN source, when they fired live rounds at members of the Bundu dia Kongo politico-religious movement who were demonstrating in Kinshasa to “chase the spirit of the coronavirus.” On July 14, the Congolese government ordered copper and cobalt mining companies to stop confining workers on site as they restricted movements due to Covid-19. In many cases workers were given no choice but to either stay and work—confined on site 24 hours a day, seven days a week—or lose their jobs.⁵²³

Referring to human rights violations throughout 2020 as documented and confirmed by the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO), its analysis for the year found:

On 18 March 2020, the President of the Republic announced the establishment of preventive measures in order to stem the spread of the Covid-19 virus. From that date until 31 December 2020, the UNJHRO documented 180 human rights violations related to these measures with at least 349 victims in 14 provinces of the country.

This includes in particular 13 violations of the right to life (with 14 victims of extrajudicial execution), 43 violations of the right to physical integrity (161 victims) including two cases of sexual violence, 52 violations of the right to liberty and security of the person (168 victims) and 41 violations of the right to property. Almost all of the violations were committed by State agents including PNC agents, the main perpetrators (126 violations), followed by FARDC soldiers (27 violations), other State agents and those of the ANR (16 and 10 violations respectively). The provinces most affected were particularly those of North Kivu (76 violations), Tanganyika (28 violations), Kinshasa (20 violations) and South Kivu (15 violations).⁵²⁴

The Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) reported that “At the end of March [2020], the country had 81 confirmed cases. The overcrowding among the more than 13 million people who populate the capital, Kinshasa, a hotbed of contamination, raises fears of a new health and humanitarian crisis for the entire country. Indeed, in addition to the cases observed in Kinshasa, now the epicentre of the epidemic, one case has already been confirmed in Goma in North Kivu and two in Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province”.⁵²⁵

UNOCHA stated in a report on the humanitarian response to COVID-19 published in April 2020 that “ As of 2 May [2020], 674 cases have been confirmed, including 34 deaths. Seven provinces (Kinshasa, North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, Kwilu, Haut-Katanga, Kongo-Central) and 40 health zones are affected. The city-province of Kinshasa remains the epicentre with 96.3% of

⁵²² Amnesty International, [Amnesty International Report 2020/21, The State of the World's Human Rights](#), 7 April 2021

⁵²³ Human Rights Watch, [World Report 2021](#) [Events of 2020], 2021

⁵²⁴ UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UJHRO), [Analysis of the human rights situation in 2020](#), 31 May 2021, paras. 67 and 68

⁵²⁵ ACTED, [Responding to the COVID-19 crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 2 April 2020

all confirmed cases”.⁵²⁶

In May 2020 Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) published an interview with David Walubila Mwinyi, MSF's Medical Data Supervisor in South Kivu, who reported about the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases:

While there are low numbers of confirmed cases in DRC, this is more likely to be linked to the fact that very few tests are conducted in the country so far. There is currently only one laboratory that can analyse samples, and it is in Kinshasa. This lab can execute around 100 tests a day for a country of 80 million people.

Yet even if people manage access to a health facility to get a test, there are still huge logistical challenges in getting these tests from rural areas in South Kivu where I work, all the way to Kinshasa. Right now, the current average wait time for results is around a week.⁵²⁷

The same source stated about vulnerable groups and stigmatisation:

Across the country – especially in the east where it is still volatile after decades of instability, war and conflict – we have several groups of already very vulnerable people. This includes people with diabetes or high blood pressure, and those who are already affected by some of the main killers of the region, like malaria and acute respiratory infections, or other diseases such as measles, cholera, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), malnutrition or even Ebola.[...] Many of these vulnerable groups face stigmatisation within their communities already. My concern is that if they become infected with COVID-19, and with so many myths and misinformation, they will face even further stigmatisation, making their lives all the harder.⁵²⁸

The same source reported difficulties to access medical supplies:

To make matters worse, now that all borders are closed it is very difficult to not only get in everyday supplies, but also humanitarian staff and medical supplies to help fight COVID-19. Medical equipment such as ventilators are desperately needed. There are only around 40 ventilators here in South Kivu and all of those are here in the capital Bukavu. These 40 ventilators will have to make do for a population of several million people. Quite simply, it's not enough.⁵²⁹

Based on data from INFORM Humanitarian Risk Index and from UNOCHA's Global Humanitarian Overview, CARE International considered in May 2020 that the DRC is one of “eight countries (Somalia, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Chad, Haiti, and Burundi) facing the highest risk of health and humanitarian impacts of COVID-19”.⁵³⁰

Describing the human rights situation between 17 June and 18 September 2020, the UN Secretary-General noted in his report that:

⁵²⁶ UNOCHA, [*République Démocratique du Congo – 3W – Réponse Humanitaire au COVID-19 dans la province de Kinshasa*](#), 30 April 2020, p. 1 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁵²⁷ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [*Managing people's fear and misinformation amid COVID-19 in DRC*](#), 6 May 2020

⁵²⁸ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [*Managing people's fear and misinformation amid COVID-19 in DRC*](#), 6 May 2020

⁵²⁹ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [*Managing people's fear and misinformation amid COVID-19 in DRC*](#), 6 May 2020

⁵³⁰ Care International, [*COVID-19 could have disastrous implications for 12 million breastfeeding women and their babies in high risk countries, warns CARE International*](#), 29 May 2020

On 13 September [2020], the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo reported 10,390 confirmed COVID-19 cases across 19 of the country's 26 provinces, including 264 deaths and over 9,807 recoveries. Despite a slowdown in reported new cases, the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 may considerably worsen the humanitarian situation and have an adverse impact on social cohesion, inequality and community resilience, while increasing poverty and the risk of human rights violations. Several ministries, civil society organizations and United Nations agencies conducted awareness-raising campaigns on gender-based violence related to COVID-19 and supported activities for women's empowerment. United Nations agencies also supported the inclusion of refugees and internally displaced persons in the national COVID-19 preparedness and response plan.⁵³¹

With regards to human rights violations committed in the context of COVID-19 restrictions, the same source noted:

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, 98 human rights violations were documented in relation to the enforcement of prevention measures, of which 71 were committed by Congolese National Police agents. Those violations included the arbitrary arrest and illegal detention of 104 people, including 15 women, and the extrajudicial killing of nine people, including one woman and one child. Restrictive measures were also used to limit the exercise of fundamental freedoms, with at least 18 violations of the right to freedom of expression and assembly in the context of the 20-person limit on gatherings imposed under the state of emergency. In response to that situation, MONUSCO organized capacity-building sessions for law enforcement officers on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of the state of emergency.⁵³²

Newland Chase reported in October 2020 that in the DRC [unofficial translation] "Effective 15 August [2020], borders, airports and ports are reopened".⁵³³

The 2021 report of the UN Secretary-General on the activities of MONUSCO during the reporting period 2 December 2020 to 18 March 2021 stated that "As at 15 March [2021], the Democratic Republic of the Congo had registered 27,077 COVID-19 cases in 23 of the 26 provinces, which had resulted in 717 deaths. On 22 February [2021], President Tshisekedi authorized the reopening of schools, which had been closed since December 2020 owing to the spread of the virus".⁵³⁴

The World Bank reported in its overview of the DRC on 2 April 2021 that "As of April 1, 2021, more than 28,000 cases had been confirmed - the majority of which in Kinshasa, though 23 out of 26 provinces have been touched by the pandemic".⁵³⁵

The World Health Organisation (WHO) reported on 19 April 2021 [unofficial translation]:

The vaccination campaign against COVID-19 in the Democratic Republic of Congo started today. The Minister of Health, accredited diplomats in the DRC, health personnel and other priority groups received their first dose of AstraZeneca vaccine at the Cliniques Universitaires de

⁵³¹ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 September 2020, para. 26

⁵³² UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 September 2020, para. 22

⁵³³ Newland Chase, [COVID-19 Travel and Immigration Updates](#), 12 October 2020, p. 54

⁵³⁴ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 32

⁵³⁵ The World Bank, [The World Bank in DRC](#), 2 April 2021

Kinshasa, where the official launch took place, as well as at various sites in other health facilities in the city-province of Kinshasa. The campaign will continue in the first 5 active provinces selected, namely: Haut-Katanga, Kongo Central, Lualaba, North Kivu and South Kivu.⁵³⁶

The World Health Organisation reported that “from 3 January 2020 [to] 14 June 2021, there have been 35 228 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 834 deaths [...] As of 10 June 2021, a total of 31 871 vaccine doses have been administered”.⁵³⁷

10.1.1.1. North Kivu

UNOCHA published in January 2021 an information note covering the period 28 December 2020 to 3 January 2021 [unofficial translation]:

"On 28 December 2020, the previously unscathed Kamango health zone, Beni territory, recorded three cases of Covid-19, the first since the Covid-19 pandemic was declared in the DRC in March [2020]. As of 27 December 2020, North Kivu province had a total of 1,262 confirmed cases".⁵³⁸

Physicians for Human Rights published a blogpost in September 2020 by Dr. Pablo Lwanzo, head doctor of the Butembo Health Zone in North Kivu, who wrote about the limited availability of labs and tests:

Among the many issues my colleagues and I face is the limited availability of labs and tests. Currently, the only testing center in North Kivu is in the city of Goma, several hundred kilometers from Butembo. It takes far too long to ship the patient samples and wait for the results. Results for Ebola tests took only a few hours, and the rapid tests made all the difference in the fight against the disease, as they allowed the patient to isolate and begin treatment immediately, in turn reducing spread. For the coronavirus, test results take a few days. Reports indicate that, in the current pandemic, some patients are abandoning isolation centers because they are not receiving their COVID-19 status quickly enough. On top of issues with testing, we face a serious shortage of protective equipment, and health care workers aren't adequately trained in how to treat COVID-19 patients.⁵³⁹

The same source noted about the population's resistance to safety measures against COVI-19:

Another obstacle is the population's resistance to following the necessary safety measures, including social distancing and wearing a mask. I believe this stems from a lack of accurate information about the pandemic. The misappropriation and abuse of aid and resources that took place during the Ebola crisis (which became known as "Ebola business") further reinforces false beliefs about the existence or transmission of the coronavirus. My colleagues and I find it highly concerning that most of the patients that we see either express skepticism about the seriousness of COVID-19 or share suspicions that the virus was introduced in the community to advance certain political or financial interests. This widespread misinformation increases mistrust and at times leads to reckless behavior, both of which can increase the spread of the

⁵³⁶ World Health Organisation (WHO), [La vaccination contre le coronavirus, COVID-19 a commencé en République Démocratique du Congo](#), 19 April 2021 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁵³⁷ World Health Organisation (WHO), [Health Emergency Dashboard](#), accessed 14 June 2021

⁵³⁸ UNOCHA, [République Démocratique du Congo Note d'informations humanitaires pour la province du Nord-Kivu](#), 5 January 2021, p. 2 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁵³⁹ Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), [Voices from the COVID-19 Pandemic: What the DRC Can Learn from its Fight Against Ebola](#), 1 September 2020

virus.⁵⁴⁰

10.1.1.2. South Kivu

UNOCHA, in a report published in May 2020 on the floods in the town of Uvira noted that [unofficial translation] “In the current context of the Covid-19 pandemic, these floods represent a real aggravating factor, particularly with regard to the respect of barrier measures in host sites and families, but also access to water and hygiene. The integration of measures against Covid-19 into the humanitarian response is being strengthened”.⁵⁴¹

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) published a blogpost in June 2020 by Joyeux Mushekuru, DRC Coordinator for PHR’s Program on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones, who wrote that “Very few health facilities have the capacity to offer this type [respiratory aid] of care and the number of available ICU beds is extremely limited. As a point of reference, the main public hospital in Bukavu shared that they only have 30 available ICU beds for a population of nearly 900,000 residents”.⁵⁴²

The same source noted concerns about “other persistent public health problems that the pandemic is exacerbating”:

Bukavu’s Police Child Protection Unit is already reporting cases of domestic violence in which perpetrators, generally spouses, are acting out under the stress that comes from supporting a household during these challenging economic times. Paradoxically, some health facilities are reporting a decrease in patients, which may be a result of survivors’ fears of being exposed to the virus while seeking treatment. This could also signal that survivors are deciding not to risk infection by seeking psychological support in health facilities. This would be especially disastrous at a time when vulnerabilities are exacerbated and gender-based violence is on the rise.

Particularly concerning is the situation of those who live in rural areas who depend on services offered in nearby cities. Many services – health care included – are not available in rural areas, as they rely on the government resources and humanitarian assistance only available in cities. Without a doubt, restrictions on movement between cities and more remote regions will deprive rural residents of access to health services.⁵⁴³

10.1.1.3. Ituri

UNOCHA reported in June 2021 that “309 COVID-19 cases had been reported in Ituri by the Ministry of Public Health as of 18 May 2021”.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴⁰ Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), [*Voices from the COVID-19 Pandemic: What the DRC Can Learn from its Fight Against Ebola*](#), 1 September 2020

⁵⁴¹ UNOCHA, [*Inondations à Uvira : Rapport de situation #2*](#), 7 May 2020, p. 3 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁵⁴² Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), [*In the DRC, COVID-19 Threatens Hard-won Gains in the Fight against Sexual Violence*](#), 18 June 2020

⁵⁴³ Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), [*In the DRC, COVID-19 Threatens Hard-won Gains in the Fight against Sexual Violence*](#), 18 June 2020

⁵⁴⁴ UNOCHA, [*République démocratique du Congo Note d’information humanitaire pour les provinces du Bas-Uélé, du Haut-Uélé, de l’Ituri et de la Tshopo*](#), 18 May 2021, p. 3

No additional information was found specifically reporting on COVID-19 in Ituri amongst the sources consulted.

10.1.1.4. Socio-Economic and social effects of COVID-19

Note that most of the information found refer to the DRC as a whole and do not necessarily distinguish between the provinces when referring to eastern DRC.

The IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification produced in September 2020 an infographic according to which “In March 2020, the Congolese Government declared a State of Emergency, closing all land and air borders with the exception of food cargo. A nationwide curfew was also enforced. The measures have had a significant impact on food prices and households’ livelihoods”.⁵⁴⁵

The same source further stated that “COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting urban households, as they are dependent on markets for food and their livelihoods have been more impacted by restriction measures. However, following the sharp price increase after the State of Emergency declaration, purchasing power deteriorated for both urban and rural households”.⁵⁴⁶

The 2020 report of the UN Secretary-General on the activities of MONUSCO during the reporting period 17 June to 18 September 2020 provided the following summary with regards to the COVID-19 epidemic in the DRC :

On 13 September [2020], the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo reported 10,390 confirmed COVID-19 cases across 19 of the country’s 26 provinces, including 264 deaths and over 9,807 recoveries. Despite a slowdown in reported new cases, the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 may considerably worsen the humanitarian situation and have an adverse impact on social cohesion, inequality and community resilience, while increasing poverty and the risk of human rights violations.⁵⁴⁷

In its Global Report on Food Crises 2021, the World Food Programme (WFP) stated about economic shocks, including COVID-19:

In March [2020], the Congolese Government declared a state of emergency and closed all land and air borders, excluding food cargo, and enforced a nationwide curfew. In a country where approximately 70 percent of the population is employed in the informal sector, confinement measures constrained households’ livelihoods and revenues, while driving food prices up and eroding household purchasing power. Border closures stymied the flow of informal cross-border trade with neighbouring countries, restricting incomes for thousands of households dependent on small-scale trade and leading to price distortions for products from the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, and South Africa (FEWS NET, October 2020). During March–April [2020], COVID-19 related measures inflated food prices by around 15 percent, particularly in eastern and south-eastern region. Between December 2019 and June 2020, COVID-19 restrictions contributed to rising food prices in larger cities, with the price of certain food products, such as green beans, doubling in Goma and Bunia (IPC, September

⁵⁴⁵ IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, [DR CONGO: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Snapshot, July 2020 - June 2021](#), 11 September 2020

⁵⁴³ IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, [DR CONGO: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Snapshot, July 2020 - June 2021](#), 11 September 2020

⁵⁴⁷ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 September 2020, para. 26

2020).⁵⁴⁸

The same source also reported about agricultural pests and diseases:

A high prevalence of plant and animal diseases continued to adversely affect yields in 2020 and exacerbate the effects of COVID-19 restrictions, conflict and flooding on production. The maize output was expected to be below average largely due to Fall Armyworm infestations (FAO-GIEWS, September 2020).⁵⁴⁹

In November 2020, Care International published a report on Conflict, COVID-19, and Food Insecurity, which stated about the DRC that “In early 2020, 15.6 million people in DRC faced acute food insecurity—the second-highest number in the world, after Yemen. Now, continued conflict and the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic have contributed to a 40% increase in the number of food-insecure people in DRC: 21.8 million people will urgently require food assistance before the end of the year. Established gender norms limit women’s access to resources, including land ownership, money and savings, and decision-making power. These inequalities make it even more difficult for women and girls to cope with food insecurity and put them at greater risk of life-threatening hunger”.⁵⁵⁰

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) published its IRC Watchlist 2021 on 12 March 2021 and wrote on the DRC Country Profile that “IRC teams in the DRC have noted that COVID-19 restrictions are likely responsible for a 15% drop in children being treated for malnutrition in 2020 despite the rapidly rising food insecurity (IRC). The DRC is also one of the ten countries globally most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change [...] and COVID-19 has further weakened the Congolese economy, making it more difficult for families to meet their needs”.⁵⁵¹

10.2. Ebola outbreaks 2019-2021

In an information note published in September 2019 and covering the period between 2 to 9 September 2019, UNOCHA noted that [unofficial translation] “428 confirmed cases of Ebola Virus Disease including 197 death [were] recorded in Ituri as of 7 Sept 2019 [...]”.⁵⁵²

In an information note covering the period between 5 to 12 November 2019, UNOCHA noted that [unofficial translation] “Insecurity is still hampering the response to Ebola in the Ituri territory of Mambasa. The opening of the Lwemba health centre, scheduled for 09 November [2020], did not take place. The new nurses assigned to the centre reportedly refused to go, fearing for their safety. Since September, there have been 15 incidents against humanitarian teams involved in the response, 12 against NGOs and three against UN agencies”.⁵⁵³ The same source stated that “9 of 36 health zones in Ituri are affected by Ebola Virus Disease (EVD); 496 confirmed cases of Ebola Virus Disease including 243 deaths recorded in Ituri as of 12

⁵⁴⁸ World Food Programme (WFP), [Global Report on Food Crises - 2021](#), 5 May 2021, *Economic shocks, including COVID-19*, p. 133

⁵⁴⁹ World Food Programme (WFP), [Global Report on Food Crises - 2021](#), 5 May 2021, p. 133

⁵⁵⁰ Care International, [Conflict, COVID-19, and Food Insecurity](#), November 2020, p. 3

⁵⁵¹ International Rescue Committee, [IRC Watchlist 2021, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO](#), 12 March 2021, p. 22

⁵⁵² UNOCHA, [Note d'informations humanitaires pour les provinces du Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, de l'Ituri et la Tshopo](#), 11 September 2019, p.2 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁵⁵³ UNOCHA, , 11 September 2019, p.2 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

November 2019 (DPS)”.⁵⁵⁴

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) published in February 2020 a report based on a study conducted in Eastern DRC on the effect of the 10th outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) on sexual and reproductive health (SRH). The report concluded that “The impacts of the EVD outbreak and response on SRH are wide-ranging, but fall especially on women and girls. Misunderstanding and fear surrounding the mechanisms of the Response have resulted in increased delays in receiving treatment, particularly for abortion and pregnancy complications”.⁵⁵⁵

In June 2020 the government of the DRC “officially announced” the end of the 10th Ebola epidemic, which was declared on 1st August 2018.⁵⁵⁶ According to the UN Emergency Ebola Response Office (UNEERO), the 10th Ebola outbreak “affected 29 health zones (211 health areas out of 471) across 3 provinces; 2,287 people have died and 1,171 people have recovered from the virus. In total, 3,470 people were affected, including 3,317 confirmed and 153 probable cases)”.⁵⁵⁷

According to The IPI Global Observatory in July 2020, “The outbreak was notable for its challenging security environment, which became a key obstacle to the response. At the height of the crisis, health workers faced near daily attacks by armed militias patrolling the region, which prompted military escorts from United Nations peacekeepers. Violence against health workers limited access to affected populations and interrupted contact tracing programs, resulting in numerous unaccounted-for chains of transmission. Community resistance was also high compared to previous outbreaks. The response turned the corner in 2019 when officials redoubled their efforts to educate, engage, and empower communities in support of the public health response”.⁵⁵⁸

In October 2020, the humanitarian country team in the DRC published a declaration with regards to allegations of sexual exploitation amidst the humanitarian response to Ebola [unofficial translation]:

The humanitarian community in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), represented by the Humanitarian Country Team, is concerned about allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse reported by The New Humanitarian and the Thomson Reuters Foundation. These articles include the testimonies of 51 women who report having been sexually exploited and abused by workers engaged in the response to the 10th Ebola outbreak in eastern DRC from 1 August 2018 to 25 June 2020. The organisations mentioned in the articles have launched or are in the process of conducting investigations to identify those responsible, conduct investigations and take appropriate disciplinary and legal measures, while respecting confidentiality and

⁵⁵⁴ UNOCHA, [*Note d'informations humanitaires pour les provinces du Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, de l'Ituri et la Tshopo*](#), 11 September 2019, p.2 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁵⁵⁵ IRC, [*Not All That Bleeds is Ebola – how the DRC outbreak impacts reproductive health*](#), 3 February 2020, p. 39

⁵⁵⁶ United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Office (UNEERO), [*United Nations Emergency Ebola Response \(UNEERO\) Head of Office: “We have beaten Ebola in Eastern DRC but the struggle isn’t over yet”*](#), 25 June 2020, p. 1 and 4

⁵⁵⁷ United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Office (UNEERO), [*United Nations Emergency Ebola Response \(UNEERO\) Head of Office: “We have beaten Ebola in Eastern DRC but the struggle isn’t over yet”*](#), 25 June 2020, p. 4

⁵⁵⁸ IPI Global Observatory, [*DRC’s Success in Containing Ebola Serves as Lesson to Countries Battling COVID-19*](#), 9 July 2020

prioritising the safety of survivors.⁵⁵⁹

International Alert reported in November 2020 with regards to the Ebola outbreak in the Kivus and Ituri provinces:

The Kivu Ebola epidemic officially began on 1 August 2018, when four cases of the Ebola virus disease (EVD) were confirmed in the eastern region of Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). By 21 January 2020, 3,416 cases had been reported and 2,238 people had died of the disease. The number of confirmed cases started to decrease on 15 September 2019 and the outbreak officially ended on 25 June 2020. During this period, the epidemic reached the South Kivu, North Kivu and Ituri provinces of DRC, an area already affected by insecurity and with a public health system hardly coping with the effects of a chronic humanitarian crisis. A series of social, cultural and political factors prevented the epidemic from being effectively controlled and managed by the DRC government, the World Health Organization (WHO), and local and international partners. Among the issues faced was that from the onset, the Ebola response was affected by violence: Ebola response workers not only had to deal with ongoing conflict dynamics, but also acts of violence targeted directly at them.[...]

Overall, the association of EVD with foreign assistance, combined with rumours of plots targeting the Nande, suspicion of the government, the perception of an attack on traditional and ancestral local culture, and lack of trust in Ebola response workers and Ebola response centres, supported by narratives of hidden interests in the “Ebola business” rumours, all contributed to a lack of trust in and resistance to the Ebola response, which within the context of ongoing armed conflict, led in some cases, to incidents of violence.⁵⁶⁰

With regards to how the Ebola epidemic was handled in North Kivu, the Congo Research Group reported in September 2020:

The international humanitarian response to the tenth Ebola epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) had a deep impact on social, political, and economic life in the east of the country. Today, the Congo Research Group (CRG) is releasing the first of a series of three reports on the outbreak and the humanitarian response. The report, titled “Ebola in the DRC: The Perverse Effects of a Parallel Health System” shows how, instead of helping the dilapidated Congolese health system cope with Ebola, the Response—a coalition of the Congolese government and international partners—developed a massive parallel health system through which Ebola was managed in North Kivu. Although it was temporary, the parallel health system set up by the Ebola Response in North Kivu contributed to undermining efforts to stem the spread of the virus. The Response concealed certain nuances about the virus during public awareness campaigns, excluded community health workers during contact tracing, and delayed implementing protocols for “dignified and safe burials.” It also began vaccinations with an opaque consent process before reversing course. The Response thus operated as a structure external to the local community. It did not systematically solicit the local community’s opinion, since “getting to zero (cases)” was its primary objective, rather than the well-being of a population that has been plagued by other forms of violence, particularly due to armed conflict, for more than two decades. In particular, the report reveals how the strategy put in place by the Response tried to bypass the Congolese health system at all costs. It set up infrastructure and put in place practices not directly linked to existing health structures. A triage system was introduced into all the health structures in the region; active surveillance teams, composed of non-medical staff, were imposed on local health structures; transit centers and Ebola treatment centers (ETCs) were created. Thus, while the Response saved lives, it also generated fear and mistrust, building on a racist history of negating African systems of knowledge

⁵⁵⁹ UNOCHA, [*Déclaration De L’équipe Humanitaire Pays En République Democratique Du Congo En Solidarité Avec Les Victimes D’exploitation Ou D’abus Sexuels*](#), 2 October 2020, p. 1, [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁵⁶⁰ International Alert, [*Ebola response and violence in the Beni and Butembo regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo*](#), November 2020

and practice that considered the Congolese health system as fundamentally incapable of fighting Ebola.⁵⁶¹

In its Humanitarian Response Plan for 2021 published in January 2021, UNOCHA stated, based on data from the WHO, that [unofficial translation] “More than 2,287 people have died from the disease between August 2018 and June 2020 out of a total of 3,317 confirmed cases in the Kivus and Ituri”.⁵⁶²

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) posted a statement on its website on 18 February 2021 in relation to Ebola in North Kivu:

In the DRC, at least four new EVD cases have been reported in North Kivu province in the eastern part of the country as of 17 February [2021]. The previous outbreak that affected the same area – the country's tenth EVD outbreak, considered the second largest in the world – was declared over in June 2020 after claiming the lives of over 3,400 people.⁵⁶³

In February 2021 The Guardian documented an Ebola case near the city of Butembo, which comes nearly three months after the end of an outbreak in the western province of Équateur, which killed 55:

Health authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo are racing to contain a possible Ebola outbreak, after a woman died from the virus near the eastern city of Butembo. The woman showed symptoms on 1 February [2021] in the town of Biena, North Kivu. She died in hospital in Butembo two days later. She was married to a man who had contracted the virus in a previous outbreak. [...]

The announcement potentially marks the start of Congo's twelfth Ebola outbreak since the virus was discovered near the Ebola River in 1976, more than double any other country.⁵⁶⁴

The 2021 report of the UN Secretary-General on the activities of MONUSCO during the reporting period 2 December 2020 to 18 March 2021 provided the following summary concerning the latest Ebola outbreak: “, the Minister of Health confirmed the death of a woman in Butembo, North Kivu from the Ebola virus disease. As at 14 March [2021], 11 confirmed cases and one probable case of Ebola had been recorded, with six fatalities and four survivors”.⁵⁶⁵

In early May 2021 the “12th Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), was declared officially over [...] just three months after the first case was reported in North Kivu, but it marks the end of the country's fourth outbreak of the deadly disease in less than three years, said the World Health Organization (WHO)” as reported by UN News.⁵⁶⁶

Based on figures provided by the Congole Ministry of Health via the World Health Organisation

⁵⁶¹ Congo Research Group, [Report – Ebola in the DRC: the perverse effects of a parallel health system](#), 17 September 2020

⁵⁶² UNOCHA, [Plan de Réponse Humanitaire, République Démocratique du Congo](#), January 2021, p. 20, [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁵⁶³ IOM, [IOM Responds to Resurgence of Ebola in Guinea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 18 February 2021

⁵⁶⁴ The Guardian, [Ebola virus kills woman in Democratic Republic of Congo, health ministry says](#), 8 February 2021

⁵⁶⁵ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 31

⁵⁶⁶ UN News, [Latest deadly Ebola virus outbreak in DR Congo declared over](#), 3 May 2021

(WHO): “12 total cases; 11 confirmed cases; 6 total deaths” were recorded.⁵⁶⁷

Insecurity Insight published in May 2021 an overview of “reported incidents of violence against health care providers in the context of the 10th Ebola outbreak in the Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)”, which stated that “3481 Ebola cases were recorded in 29 health sectors in North and South Kivu and Ituri provinces”.⁵⁶⁸

The same source reported that :

The number of reported attacks on health facilities in the form of arson attacks and ransacking peaked in the middle of the [10th] Ebola response. However, attacks on health facilities were a common security threat for health facilities in unstable areas prior to the disease outbreak. These incidents decrease access to health care for civilian populations.[...]

The precise motives of the perpetrators remains unclear. However, social media may have been used to build up distrust and possibly to incite violence. On 16 April 2020, riots organised by Veranda Mutsanga ensued in Beni, North Kivu, during which three ETC’s were ransacked, vandalised, and looted.⁵⁶⁹

In a March 2021 report on Social Media Monitoring, Insecurity Insight analysed that :

Social media reactions to news surrounding the new [12th] Ebola outbreak indicate that the damaging rumours which negatively impacted public health campaigns during the tenth Ebola epidemic by supporting and increasing community resistance are still shared by some members of local communities.

Some of these rumours include the claim that Ebola is a plot by outsiders and corrupt institutions or individuals to make money from the outbreak.⁵⁷⁰

10.3. Other epidemics

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported in December 2019 that “Since January 2019, more than 288,000 people have contracted measles in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and more than 5,700 have died from the disease”.⁵⁷¹

During the reporting period 26 November 2019 to 16 March 2020 on the activities of MONUSCO, the UN Secretary-General warned that the DRC was “experiencing the worst measles epidemic in its history, with nearly 320,000 cases and more than 6,000 deaths, mostly of children, recorded between January 2019 and January 2020”.⁵⁷²

In the same report the UN Secretary-General wrote about the ongoing cholera epidemic that “As at 26 January [2020], 2,651 suspected cases were reported, including 43 deaths since the beginning of 2020”.⁵⁷³

⁵⁶⁷ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [DRC's twelfth Ebola outbreak](#), 7 May 2021

⁵⁶⁸ Insecurity Insight, [Attacks on Health Care During the 10th Ebola Response in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 24 May 2021, p. 1

⁵⁶⁹ Insecurity Insight, [Attacks on Health Care During the 10th Ebola Response in the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), 24 May 2021, *Attacks on Health Facilities*, p. 6

⁵⁷⁰ Insecurity Insight, [Social Media Monitoring : The DRC](#), March 2021, p. 1

⁵⁷¹ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [Extra humanitarian assistance urgently needed in southern North Kivu crisis](#), 16 December 2019

⁵⁷² UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2020, para.31

⁵⁷³ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic](#)

The same source also reported that Malaria still posed “an important health threat, with nearly 16.5 million cases and some 17,000 deaths recorded in 2019”.⁵⁷⁴

MSF reported in May 2020 about the measles epidemic in DRC:

Overshadowed by the Ebola outbreak in the east of the country, the measles response in DRC has been neglected from the start. It took months before the epidemic was finally declared in June 2019, while the vaccination campaigns organised by authorities were marked by delays, coordination issues and a lack of supporting partners, many of whom were focused on the response to Ebola. A supplementary vaccination campaign, intended to 'mop up' those children who had been missed, was repeatedly postponed, before finally taking place in late 2019.⁵⁷⁵

In its report covering the period 2 December 2020 to 18 March 2021, the UN Secretary-General noted that “cholera, malaria and measles still represent major challenges” and added that “the bubonic plague is resurgent in Ituri”.⁵⁷⁶

In its Global Report on Food Crises 2021, the World Food Programme (WFP) stated that “Over 18 500 suspected cholera cases including 301 deaths were reported in the country by early December [2020] down from 27 833 cases and 407 deaths during the same period in 2019 (ECDC, December 2020). Monkeypox and plague were also present in 2020 (WHO, 2020)”.⁵⁷⁷

11. Socio-Economic Situation for the local population

The following is a non-exhaustive list of sources that produce regular updates on the humanitarian situation in the DRC, which may be consulted for the most up-to-date information:

- [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(UNOCHA\)](#), Situation Reports (in French)
- [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(UNOCHA\)](#), Humanitarian Bulletins (in French)
- [UNICEF](#), Monthly situation reports

The following databases are also useful to consult:

- [Assessment Capacities Project \(ACAPS\)](#), DRC specific page
- [Humanitarian Response](#), DRC specific page
- [Reliefweb](#), DRC specific page

Overview in the DRC generally and eastern DRC specifically

of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General, 18 March 2020, para.31

⁵⁷⁴ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2020, para.31

⁵⁷⁵ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [Measles is a steady, silent killer among COVID-19](#), 5 May 2020

⁵⁷⁶ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 31

⁵⁷⁷ World Food Programme (WFP), [Global Report on Food Crises - 2021](#), 5 May 2021, p. 133

In its 2019 humanitarian needs review and response UNOCHA stated that [unofficial translation]:

In 2019, nearly 16 million people were acutely food insecure, a figure that has increased from 2018. In 2019, around 3.8 million children under five were acutely malnourished, a figure that is on par with the four million children affected by this scourge since 2016. Epidemics have also affected the lives of millions of Congolese. More than 5,000 people, nearly 90% of them children, died of measles in 2019, the country's worst outbreak in 10 years with more than 250,000 cases. Successive vaccination campaigns have taken place but have failed to stop the epidemic. Because clean water, hygiene and sanitation facilities are scarce for millions of Congolese, cholera has flourished this year, with more than 25,000 cases reported. The year 2019 has also been marked in recent weeks by floods that have affected more than 923,000 people across 16 of the country's 26 provinces. This bleak humanitarian picture has been set against the backdrop of a financial shortfall, hampering the response to those targeted. With 13 days to go, the 2019 humanitarian response plan, set at US\$1.6 billion, is only 44% funded, meaning that more than half of the Congolese targeted to receive aid have not received it.⁵⁷⁸

Reporting on events in 2020, Amnesty International reported in relation to economic, social and cultural rights issues:

[...] ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

COVID-19-related lockdowns and other restrictions had an adverse impact on low income households although the government took measures to alleviate hardship by, for instance, providing some essential services like water and electricity for a two-month period. Such households in urban and rural areas, and in the border regions, lost key sources of income due to the decline in demand for informal economy workers and those involved in cross-border trading. The government continued in its failure to enforce environmental and labour protection regulations in the mining industry where many workers were exposed to toxic pollution which caused birth defects in the children of cobalt and copper miners.¹ Men, women and children worked in some mines without basic protective equipment like gloves and face masks. They also complained of respiratory diseases and urinary tract infections, among other health problems. The use of child labour, forced evictions to make way for mining projects, a lack of transparency over how mining rights were awarded, corruption, tax evasion and abusive transfer pricing were widespread. [...] ⁵⁷⁹

Handicap International published in June 2020 a report on access to humanitarian assistance of people living with a disability, based on data collected in the Kivus, among other provinces.⁵⁸⁰ One of the results of the study was [unofficial translation]: “The findings show that state and humanitarian actors in the DRC do not have sufficient knowledge about people with disabilities, thus failing to recognise their specific needs and to provide appropriate responses and reasonable accommodations”.⁵⁸¹

Radio Okapi reported in August 2020 the “resumption of classes in the final classes, yesterday, Monday [10 August 2020] in schools and universities of the RDC after 4 months of interruption

⁵⁷⁸ UNOCHA, [*Le Gouvernement Congolais Et La Communauté Humanitaire Dressent Le Bilan De 2019 Et Sollicitent Plus De Fonds Pour La Réponse Humanitaire En 2020*](#), pp.1-2 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁵⁷⁹ Amnesty International, [*Amnesty International Report 2020/21, The State of the World's Human Rights*](#), 7 April 2021

⁵⁸⁰ Handicap International, [*RD Congo : Rapport d'analyse des barrières d'accès des personnes handicapées à la réponse humanitaire*](#), 8 juin 2020 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁵⁸¹ Handicap International, [*RD Congo : Rapport d'analyse des barrières d'accès des personnes handicapées à la réponse humanitaire*](#), 8 juin 2020, p. 3 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

caused by the pandemic Covid-19”.⁵⁸²

UNICEF stated in August 2020 that “21 out of 26 provinces are partially covered by at least one form of distance education through 327 radio stations and 25 television channels, reaching 6,970,762 million children and adolescents”.⁵⁸³

Save the Children reported in September 2020, based on a study of the impact of COVID-19 on child poverty, that in West and Central Africa, “more than three in four (77%) adult respondents reported an income loss due to COVID-19” and “54% of children reported needing learning materials – 60% of girls compared to 44% of boys”.⁵⁸⁴

The IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification produced in September 2020 a map showing the ‘Acute Food Insecurity Situation’ in the DRC from July to December 2020 and projections for the period from January to June 2021, which can be viewed [here](#).⁵⁸⁵

The same source published infographics according to which “More than 21.8 million people in DR Congo facing high levels of acute food insecurity in Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse from July to December 2020. [...] In South Kivu, Tanganyika, Haut Lomami and Haut Katanga, heavy rains resulted in flooding which damaged food crops. Around 500,000 people have lost almost all of their food reserves. A high prevalence of plant and animal diseases continues to hamper agriculture. [...] The provinces of North and South Kivu, Ituri and Kasai Central have the highest number of populations facing high acute food insecurity”.⁵⁸⁶

In its 2020 Humanitarian Access Overview report published in December 2020, the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) described the situation in DRC as follows:

The security situation remains volatile because of armed clashes and inter-ethnic conflicts, particularly in Nord-Kivu, Sud-Kivu, and Ituri. Insecurity hampers the population’s access to services and aid, as attacks often displace people from towns and villages into the forest and other remote areas. Main roads in the eastern provinces are targets of violence, hindering the freedom of movement of people in need. People are also required to pay to pass through checkpoints, which are set up both by security forces and armed groups. NGOs have reported difficulties in their registration process and in obtaining visas. Humanitarian operations are sometimes temporarily suspended because of violence. In some areas, access is subject to extensive negotiations with several parties. Armed groups ambush and rob aid convoys and abduct aid workers for ransom. Four humanitarian workers were killed between April–September 2020. Certain areas can be completely cut off from road access when flooding occurs. Poor road conditions, including large stretches of unpaved road, limit travel, particularly for heavy vehicles used for transporting aid.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸² Radio Okapi, [Enseignement en RDC, les classes terminales ont repris les cours sur fond des revendications salariales](#), 11 August 2020

⁵⁸³ UNICEF DRC, [COVID-19 Situation Report, 23 July – 12 August 2020](#), 12 August 2020, p. 5

⁵⁸⁴ Save the Children, [The Hidden Impact of COVID-19 on Child Poverty – A Global Research Series](#), 10 September 2020, p. 49

⁵⁸⁵ IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, [DR CONGO: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Snapshot, July 2020 - June 2021](#), 11 September 2020

⁵⁸⁶ IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, [DR CONGO: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Snapshot, July 2020 - June 2021](#), 11 September 2020

⁵⁸⁷ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Humanitarian Access Overview](#), 14 December 2020, p. 9

UNOCHA, looking back on the year 2020 in its Overview of Humanitarian Needs in the DRC reported that [unofficial translation] “COVID-19, the first case of which was reported in DRC in March 2020, has profoundly affected the livelihoods of the most vulnerable households and has exacerbated protection risks. By the end of December [2020], 17,658 confirmed cases had been reported, including 591 deaths in 22 of the country's 26 provinces. The capital, Kinshasa, remains the area most affected by COVID-19”.⁵⁸⁸

The same source reported that [unofficial translation] “the implementation of free basic education in DRC in 2020 has had mixed effects. Although it has helped to reduce parents' financial expenditure on education, it may have led to an increase in class sizes in some areas where the number of schools is limited”.⁵⁸⁹

According to an infographic produced by UNOCHA, as of 31 December 2020, there were “673,700 people in phase 3 (crisis) of food insecurity and 335,600 people in phase 4 (emergency) of food insecurity in North Kivu and Ituri”.⁵⁹⁰

According to the same source, there were 3,800 incidents related to the right to property in 2020 in North Kivu and Ituri.⁵⁹¹

The World Bank described the economic situation in the DRC as of 2 April 2021 as follows:

DRC's economic growth decelerated from its pre-COVID level of 4.4% in 2019, to an estimated 0.8% in 2020. Growth was driven by the extractives sector which, helped by robust demand from China, expanded by 6.9% in 2020 (compared to 1% in 2019). Meanwhile, non-mining sectors contracted by 1.6% (vs. growth of 5.7% in 2019) due to pandemic-related mobility restrictions, weaker trading activities and constrained government spending. Private consumption and government investment fell in 2020 by an estimated 1.0 and 10.2%, respectively.

The current account deficit widened to 4.0% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020 and was only partly financed by capital inflows which led to a decline in international reserves.

In an effort to respond to the pandemic, the government faced substantial spending pressure while revenue declined due to reduced economic activity and extended fiscal relief measures. As a result, the fiscal deficit worsened to 1.9% of GDP in 2020. For financing, the government initially resorted to Central Bank (BCC) advances until April 2020 and subsequently mobilized emergency support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the African Development Bank (AfDB). It also increased domestic debt issuance and accumulated arrears. Consequently, the total stock of both external public debt and domestic debt rose in 2020 to an estimated 15.9% and 8.9% of GDP, respectively.

Although the DRC initiated reforms aimed at strengthening governance in the management of natural resources and improving the business climate, the country is ranked 183 out of 190 countries in the 2020 Doing Business report. Key governance indicators remain weak.⁵⁹²

In its Global Report on Food Crises 2021, the World Food Programme (WFP) stated about

⁵⁸⁸ UNOCHA, [Aperçu des besoins humanitaires – République Démocratique du Congo](#), 1 January 2021, pp. 8-9 [unofficial translation by a COI researcher]

⁵⁸⁹ UNOCHA, [Aperçu des besoins humanitaires – République Démocratique du Congo](#), 1 January 2021, p. 20 [unofficial translation by a COI researcher]

⁵⁹⁰ UNOCHA, [Deterioration of the humanitarian situation: Beni, Mambasa and Irumu Territories](#), 2 March 2021

⁵⁹¹ UNOCHA, [Deterioration of the humanitarian situation: Beni, Mambasa and Irumu Territories](#), 2 March 2021

⁵⁹² The World Bank, [The World Bank in DRC](#), 2 April 2021

economic shocks, including COVID-19:

Household purchasing power was further eroded by the depreciation of the Congolese Franc (INS, July 2020). Agricultural households dependent on the production of major food exports, such as coffee, cocoa and tobacco, faced declining revenues and rising costs for imported agricultural inputs (FEWS NET, October 2020). According to the INS, the confluence of these factors led to a 30 percent decline in the purchasing power of most agricultural households, rendering populations more susceptible to food, nutrition and health-related crises (INS, July 2020).⁵⁹³

UNICEF stated in a May 2021 report on COVID-19 school closures in the DRC that “Primary schools across the country noted an increase in class size since the introduction of the free primary school policy”.⁵⁹⁴

According to the UN Secretary-General’s report covering major events and developments between 19 March and 18 June 2021, the humanitarian situation was described as follows:

The humanitarian situation deteriorated further as a result of violence, epidemics and the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo in North Kivu on 22 May [2021]. The socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities stemming from a lack of access to essential services. As at 17 June [2021], the humanitarian response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo for 2021, which calls for \$1.98 billion to meet the priority needs of 9.6 million of the 19.6 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in the country, was 12 per cent funded.⁵⁹⁵

11.1. North Kivu

Volcanic eruption in Goma (May 2021)

UN News reported that on 22nd May 2021, Mount Nyiragongo volcano erupted near the city of Goma “causing thousands to flee the city of two million, located just to the south”.⁵⁹⁶

UNOCHA reported that “Three villages and one neighborhood in the city of Goma were destroyed by the lava on the DRC side” and “over 3,629 houses were ravaged by lava, 23 roofs of houses were blown away, the Goma-Rutshuru road cut off (about 2km invaded by lava) and 3 health structures as well as 12 primary and secondary schools were destroyed”.⁵⁹⁷

On the day following the eruption, UNICEF informed that “More than 5,000 people crossed the border into Rwanda from Goma [...] and at least 25,000 were displaced in Sake, 25 km north-west of Goma. However, most people are slowly making their way back home since the lava has stopped flowing”.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹³ World Food Programme (WFP), [Global Report on Food Crises - 2021](#), 5 May 2021, p. 133

⁵⁹⁴ UNICEF, [COVID-19 school closures In the DRC: Impact on the health, protection and education of children and youth](#), 6 May 2021, p. 5, footnote 3

⁵⁹⁵ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 June 2021, para. 32

⁵⁹⁶ UN News, [DR Congo: More than 170 children feared missing following volcanic eruption in Goma](#), 23 May 2021

⁵⁹⁷ UNOCHA, [DR Congo: Volcanic eruption in Goma – Situation Report No. 1](#), 25 May 2021, Situation Overview, p. 2

⁵⁹⁸ UNICEF, [Children and families at risk following huge volcano eruption in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, warns UNICEF](#), 23 May 2021

The Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) reported on 26 May 2021 that

Infrastructure was destroyed and electricity and water supply has been cut off. Destruction of water pipes has left around 500,000 people without water. Transportation and food distribution was disrupted as a section of the National Road N2 connecting Goma to the north, was cut off by lava. People had started to return home but on 27 May [2021] Goma authorities ordered the evacuation of ten (out of 18) neighbourhoods because of the risk of a new eruption. Tens of thousands of people displaced towards Sake town, the southwest region of Masisi, and the nearby Rwandan border.⁵⁹⁹

According to a press release from 27 May 2021 by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), its DRC Country Director Borry Jatta stated:

There have been more than 200 tremors in the past 2 days and for residents of Goma, the impact of the eruption is not behind them. The earthquakes as well as the possibility of a new eruption continue to cause alarm as the risk to their lives and homes persist. With at least 500 homes destroyed, many are sleeping outside out of fear of buildings collapsing due to cracks. Widespread fear has led more residents to flee the city, in addition to the 30,000 people who left after the eruption last weekend. Families have been separated and more than 170 children are still feared missing.⁶⁰⁰

UNICEF wrote in a press release published five days after the eruption that “At least 32 people have died as a direct result of the eruption, including three children, while 40 people have been reported as missing”.⁶⁰¹ The agency warned :

As the authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) advise people living in part of the city of Goma [the Red Zone] to vacate their homes due to the risk of another volcanic eruption, [...] as many as 400,000 people - including 280,000 children - could be displaced and in need of protection or support.⁶⁰²

In the same report, UNICEF reported that: “Nearly 1,000 children who were separated from their parents amid the chaos following the first day of the destruction have now been identified, with UNICEF helping to reunite nearly 700 children with their families. An additional 142 children have been placed in transitional foster families, while 78 are in transit accommodation centers. Tragically more than 170 families are still looking for lost children. UNICEF is now concerned that the chaos of the latest evacuations will result in more children being separated from their families”.⁶⁰³

UNOCHA stated in its situation report of 30 May 2021 that “Supply problems and the associated price increases have had far-reaching repercussions, as Goma is one of the major supply hubs for localities in the area. In Sake, while on 26 May it was possible to buy 12 kg of cornmeal on the local market for 10,000 FC francs, on 28 May it was only possible to buy 8 kg. In Rutshuru center, the price of a measure of maize almost doubled (from 800 to 1,500 FC) between 26 May and 28 May. This trend was likely exacerbated in the main areas hosting displaced populations (notably Minova and Sake), due to the increased demand”.⁶⁰⁴

⁵⁹⁹ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [News and Press Release](#), 26 May 2021

⁶⁰⁰ International Rescue Committee, [DRC: IRC is concerned about the risk of a second volcanic eruption and continued health risks in Goma](#), 27 May 2021

⁶⁰¹ UNICEF, [Up to 280,000 children face displacement because of DRC volcano threat](#), 27 May 2021

⁶⁰² UNICEF, [Up to 280,000 children face displacement because of DRC volcano threat](#), 27 May 2021

⁶⁰³ UNICEF, [Up to 280,000 children face displacement because of DRC volcano threat](#), 27 May 2021

⁶⁰⁴ UNOCHA, [DR Congo : Volcanic eruption in Goma, Situation Report #5](#), 30 May 2021, p. 1

On 1 June 2021, IOM released the following information in relation to the effects of the volcanic eruption in Goma [unofficial translation]:

The eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano forced more than 415,000 people, nearly half of them minors, to leave Goma, according to thousands of individual assessments by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Displacement Monitoring Matrix. An estimated 86 per cent of IDPs, or 114,000 people, have moved to Masisi; another 77,000 have gone to Rutshuru. About 52,000 people crossed the border into Rwanda. IOM data collectors spoke to 6,000 people in the area. They report that about 47 per cent of the people on the move are under 18 years old and about 58 per cent are women. According to IOM, at least 28 per cent of the displaced are from vulnerable groups. These include children under five, nursing mothers, the chronically ill, pregnant women, unaccompanied children, the elderly and people with mental health problems and physical disabilities. The displaced have fled mainly on foot but also by boat, car, motorbike, bus and truck.⁶⁰⁵

UNHCR's head of office in Goma, Jackie Keegan, noted in early June 2021 :

An estimated 450,000 people have fled Goma - around 120,000 of those have arrived in the neighbouring town of Sake in the eastern province of North Kivu. Around 8,000 also crossed the border into Rwanda, though the majority have since returned.

Most of the displaced are currently being sheltered by host families, while others are staying in overcrowded churches and schools. Displaced people are in urgent need of housing and basic items like sleeping mats, blankets and kitchen utensils following the volcanic eruption.[...] Many people's houses were destroyed by the lava flow, but many more had to leave following the evacuation order for the eight areas of Goma that are most at risk if another eruption hits the city. [...]

Assessments on the ground show that shelter is the most urgent need, as are water and food. [...]

There is also a need to for psychosocial care in hosting areas, as requested by doctors at the regional hospital, since so many people are coming forward with signs of trauma. The same will be needed in schools [...]

The challenges in North Kivu province were already huge before this latest displacement, as conflicts and violence have uprooted over 2 million people in the province including 450,000 this year alone.⁶⁰⁶

According to the UN Secretary-General's report covering major events and developments between 19 March and 18 June 2021, the situation was described as follows:

The eruption of Mount Nyiragongo on 22 May killed at least 32 people and displaced over 230,000 people from Goma to Sake, Rutshuru, Kitshanga, Beni, Minova, Bukavu and other locations. An estimated 50,000 people also fled to Rwanda. Humanitarian actors continue to provide assistance, while MONUSCO is supporting the Congolese authorities in ensuring security in affected areas in Goma. On 7 June [2021], the Prime Minister announced that the risks related to volcanic activity had subsided sufficiently to allow the population to return to Goma. As at 15 June [2021], 80 to 90 per cent of the population had returned, according to estimates from the North Kivu provincial authorities.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁵ IOM, [L'éruption du volcan de Goma déplace 415 700 personnes tandis que l'OIM prépare son intervention](#), 1 June 2021 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶⁰⁶ UNHCR, [Some 350,000 people in urgent need of help in Goma](#), 1 June 2021

⁶⁰⁷ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 21 June 2021, para. 33

11.1.1. Access to housing

UNOCHA stated in its report, covering 25 August to 7 September 2020, on the humanitarian situation in North-Kivu

The population of Beni territory continues to suffer the consequences of violent attacks by armed men. More than 15 incursions by armed men affected several villages in the health zones of Oicha and Mutwanga between 24 August and 6 September 2020. Around 30 civilians were killed and others reported missing, while the property of the inhabitants was looted and a dozen houses burnt down.⁶⁰⁸

The same source further noted that [unofficial translation]:

Around 5,000 households lack essential household items in the Mutwanga health zone in Beni territory. Their homes were destroyed in the May 2020 floods. In addition to the floods, this health zone continues to be affected by recurrent population displacements due to armed clashes and attacks on populations, since February 2020.⁶⁰⁹

11.1.2. Access to livelihood

In October 2020, Human Rights Watch reported on forced labour and illegal taxation, particularly in North Kivu:

[...] Illegal 'Taxation,' Forced Labor

The NDC-R set up a sophisticated illegal tax system in areas under their control. Adults were forced to pay about 1,000 Congolese francs (US\$0.60) per month for a security tax known as lala salama ("sleep in peace" in Swahili). Guidon's group at times also imposed additional taxes on the population. Those unable to pay were often detained, beaten, raped, and forced to pay large sums in cash or in-kind to be released.

The NDC-R often forced adults and children to take part in "community labor," or salongo in Swahili. Several people from Masisi said that men and boys were forced to work one or two days a week. This included heavy work, such as digging trenches or constructing shelters at NDC-R positions, building and cleaning roads, or clearing land.

Those who failed to comply with the salongo were beaten and forced to pay "fines." For the work, the NDC-R gave them jetons, tokens which certified their attendance. A teacher from Masisi territory said: "We keep the jetons jealously. If I lose it and they [NDC-R] stop me on the way, they can kill me. Even the students have to do this work".⁶¹⁰

In its Global Report on Food Crises 2021, the World Food Programme (WFP) reported that "In July-December 2020 [...] the provinces of [...] North [...] Kivu [...] contained the largest number of people in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above)".⁶¹¹

The same source further reported that "Households experienced the destruction or theft of crops by armed groups or were prevented from accessing their fields. These factors were expected to produce lower-than-normal harvests, limiting the food production capacity of subsistence households and increasing their dependence on markets (FEWS NET, October

⁶⁰⁸ UNOCHA, [République Démocratique du Congo, Note d'informations humanitaires pour la province du Nord-Kivu](#), 7 September 2020, p. 1 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶⁰⁹ UNOCHA, [République Démocratique du Congo, Note d'informations humanitaires pour la province du Nord-Kivu](#), 7 September 2020, p. 1 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, [DR Congo: Wanted Warlord Preys on Civilians](#), 20 October 2020

⁶¹¹ World Food Programme (WFP), [Global Report on Food Crises - 2021](#), 5 May 2021, p. 130

2020)".⁶¹²

The same source also indicated that "Heavy rain during October [2020] affected nearly 100 000 people through the loss of food reserves and harvests in Masisi (North Kivu), Kalehe (South Kivu), and Mbanza-Ngungu (Kongo central) (FEWS NET, December 2020). In the Kirotshe area, around 80 percent of fields were partially or entirely destroyed, eliminating the harvest and production capacity of local households (OCHA, October 2020)".⁶¹³

11.1.3. Access to healthcare

The Congolese Research Group published a report entitled "Ebola in the DRC: The Perverse Effects of a Parallel Health System" which "shows how, instead of helping the dilapidated Congolese health system cope with Ebola, the Response—a coalition of the Congolese government and international partners—developed a massive parallel health system through which Ebola was managed in North Kivu":

Although it was temporary, the parallel health system set up by the Ebola Response in North Kivu contributed to undermining efforts to stem the spread of the virus. The Response concealed certain nuances about the virus during public awareness campaigns, excluded community health workers during contact tracing, and delayed implementing protocols for "dignified and safe burials." It also began vaccinations with an opaque consent process before reversing course. The Response thus operated as a structure external to the local community. It did not systematically solicit the local community's opinion, since "getting to zero (cases)" was its primary objective, rather than the well-being of a population that has been plagued by other forms of violence, particularly due to armed conflict, for more than two decades. In particular, the report reveals how the strategy put in place by the Response tried to bypass the Congolese health system at all costs. It set up infrastructure and put in place practices not directly linked to existing health structures. A triage system was introduced into all the health structures in the region; active surveillance teams, composed of non-medical staff, were imposed on local health structures; transit centers and Ebola treatment centers (ETCs) were created. Thus, while the Response saved lives, it also generated fear and mistrust, building on a racist history of negating African systems of knowledge and practice that considered the Congolese health system as fundamentally incapable of fighting Ebola. In order to better control epidemics in the DRC today and tomorrow, it will be essential to rebuild the Congolese health system. This report, which principally covers the six health zones of North Kivu that registered more than 100 cases of Ebola (Beni, Butembo, Katwa, Vuhovi, Kalunguta, and Mabalako), is the result of a survey on the impact of Ebola and the Response on the local community, conducted among more than 3,630 households between January and March 2020. Our field researchers also reviewed retrospective hospital data from 56 health facilities and six health zones in the region, examined more than 200 documents (presentations, publications, and reports) from the Response, and reviewed practices initiated by Congolese people themselves to treat Ebola outside the official health system.⁶¹⁴

UNOCHA stated in its report, covering 25 August to 7 September 2020, that the [unofficial translation] "the epicentre of the Ebola virus disease that plagued the region from 1 August 2018 to 25 June 2020".⁶¹⁵

⁶¹² World Food Programme (WFP), [Global Report on Food Crises - 2021](#), 5 May 2021, p. 133

⁶¹³ World Food Programme (WFP), [Global Report on Food Crises - 2021](#), 5 May 2021, p. 133

⁶¹⁴ Congolese Research Group, [Report – EBOLA in the DRC: The perverse effects of a parallel health system](#), 17 September 2020

⁶¹⁵ UNOCHA, [République Démocratique du Congo, Note d'informations humanitaires pour la province du Nord-Kivu](#), 7 September 2020, p. 1 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

UNOCHA stated in its report covering the humanitarian situation in North-Kivu between 11 and 17 January 2021 that [unofficial translation] “[...] in the health zones of Bambo and Birambizo, the NGO HYFRO is carrying out a 9-month project, which runs from October 2020 to July 2021. This area is home to several IDP sites that lack health and sanitation infrastructure. In addition, it has a poor supply of drinking water, leading to frequent cases of diarrhoea”.⁶¹⁶

11.1.4. Access to education

In October 2019 the Congolese Research Group reported:

107 students here, 114 others there. Grade 7 classrooms at the Sake Institute, some 27 km southwest of Goma, are particularly crowded at the start of the school year. “They have become audiences,” comments a teacher, referring to Congolese universities that are often overcrowded. “At the start of each class,” adds another teacher, “the students rush into the classroom: not only out of a desire to learn, but above all because only the first to arrive will find a seat in these rooms built to accommodate 50 schoolchildren. So, “they can sit in the aisle, stay standing, as long as they learn something!” [...]

it is mainly due to the enthusiasm which accompanied the announcement of free primary education. Since August 20, 2019, when a tweet from Tina Salama, the deputy spokesperson for the President of the Republic, announces the news, it has been greeted with relief by the parents who, since 1993, have been in charge of education of their children, through “incentive bonuses” and other costs, which are constantly increasing each year, imposed on them by the various schools. [...]

In addition, in its circular of October 11, 2019 specifying the accompanying measures for free, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Technical Education prohibits the payment of “motivation costs at all levels of education (nursery, primary and secondary)”. Consequence: secondary schools find themselves equally concerned by free education. In some schools, parents are reluctant to pay and some teachers struggle to be paid. School principals are unable to support the functioning of schools. [...] ⁶¹⁷

Basing its analysis on country information compiled by a range of sources as well as on a review of recent rapid needs assessments undertaken in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika, the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) reported in October 2020 that “Assessments in Oicha Commune, Beni, North Kivu in June 2020 confirmed that schools had been closed since 20 March due to COVID-19 measures (ACOPE/ASBL 23/06/2020)”.⁶¹⁸

The same source noted:

Assessments highlighted that heavy rains and flooding have also inflicted significant damages on school buildings in some areas. An evaluation on heavy rains in Beni city, North Kivu on 24 April 2020 indicated that six schools had been damaged (ACOPE/ASBL26/04/2020), affecting 6,134 primary and secondary students, among which 138 are orphans and reside in the schools.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁶ UNOCHA, [République Démocratique du Congo, Note d'informations humanitaires pour la province du Nord-Kivu](#), 17 janvier 2021, p. 2 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶¹⁷ Congolese Research Group, [Free Education: The Risky Bet of Félix Tshisekedi](#), 31 October 2019

⁶¹⁸ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Education & child protection challenges in Eastern DRC - Impact of COVID-19, conflict and policy reform](#), 19 October 2020, p. 5

⁶¹⁹ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Education & child protection challenges in Eastern DRC - Impact of COVID-19, conflict and policy reform](#), 19 October 2020, pp. 6-7

11.2. South Kivu

In September 2019 the Africa Center for Strategic Studies reported on a study conducted in Bushwira, Kanyola, Sange and Kipupu:

[...] This study was conducted in four localities: Bushwira, Kanyola, Sange and Kipupu. In each locality, around 60 people were interviewed, each selected at random in the street, both in town and in more rural contexts. In addition to questions about their own background and a control survey about the current security and justice situation, respondents were asked a series of open questions about governance, security and justice, and the social contract in their 'ideal village'. [...]

While not representative of South Kivu, let alone the DRC, they reflect a wide range of experience in eastern DRC. [...]

In all four localities, the international presence in the form of MONUSCO or international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) is very limited, as is the presence of local civil society. For the purpose of this study, 28 interviews were also conducted with senior members of MONUSCO and INGOs in January and June 2019, as well as 12 interviews with local members of civil society and researchers. Congolese research teams in all questioned over 250 inhabitants and 39 local stakeholders in the four localities in the period February to March 2019. Finally, a community meeting was held in Bushwira and the preliminary results were discussed with key stakeholders in Goma in June 2019. [...]

Socio-economic expectations

Respondents in all four areas aspire to see jobs created and an end to the isolation of their communities, and see this as a precondition for peace and well-being. A local humanitarian worker stated 'the exact role of the state is to give young people jobs, education and health care. Many young people are unemployed, which is why they commit themselves to armed groups. If the state gives them work, I think it can reduce insecurity'. [...]

people wanted jobs and development first and foremost. They saw an important role for INGOs in the construction of schools and health centres. As a consequence, people wanted to be better informed about the actions of the INGO's working in their areas and to have a say in setting their priorities. Such organizations often work through local leaders, but these are often not considered legitimate as they tend to prioritize their own individual interests.⁶²⁰

UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic reported in April 2020:

Significant rainfall in South Kivu's Uvira town and its surroundings [which] led to heavy floods hitting densely populated areas of the town and surrounding villages that are hosting displaced people – including refugees.[...] Initial reports suggest more than 25 people have died because of the floods and more than 40 injured with fears of many others swept away by the flood waters. A health clinic in one of Uvira's poorer neighbourhoods was destroyed and water and sanitation facilities in the overcrowded town were also damaged.⁶²¹

11.2.1. Access to housing

UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic noted in April 2020 on the floods affecting Uvira and its surroundings that "Floodwaters have damaged more than 15,000 homes. With a full-scale assessment underway by authorities and humanitarians, reports of more devastation are still

⁶²⁰ Africa Center for Strategic Studies, [Securing Legitimate Stability in the DRC: External Assumptions and Local Perspectives](#), 30 September 2019

⁶²¹ UNHCR, [Massive floods in DRC's South Kivu impact 80,000 people, kill dozens](#), 21 April 2020

coming in from this region, already the hardest hit by years of insecurity and conflict”.⁶²²

UNOCHA reported in May 2020 [unofficial translation]:

- The torrential rains that have fallen in the Uvira region since mid-April have so far resulted in the death of at least 44 people and the injury of nearly 200; more than 5,500 houses have been destroyed, and at least 70,000 people are homeless.
- Dozens of socio-economic infrastructures have also been damaged; nearly 280,000 people are without access to safe drinking water as a result of damage to the water distribution network.
- Access and road traffic within Uvira and between Uvira and other localities, such as Bukavu, are severely disrupted due to damage to roads and bridges, affecting the operational capacities of humanitarian actors.⁶²³

11.2.2. Access to livelihood

In its Global Report on Food Crises 2021, the World Food Programme (WFP) reported that “In July-December 2020 [...] the provinces of [...] South Kivu [...] contained the largest number of people in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above)”.⁶²⁴

The same source further reported that “Households experienced the destruction or theft of crops by armed groups or were prevented from accessing their fields. These factors were expected to produce lower-than-normal harvests, limiting the food production capacity of subsistence households and increasing their dependence on markets (FEWS NET, October 2020)”.⁶²⁵

The same source further indicated that “During the first half of 2020, heavy rain in South Kivu, [...] led to flooding that damaged food crops and deprived around 500 000 people of nearly all their food reserves (IPC, September 2020). In the city of Uvira in South Kivu, the International Red Cross estimated that heavy rain forced around 108 400 people to leave their homes and move into temporary shelters or reside with host families (IFRC, November 2020)”.⁶²⁶

11.2.3. Access to healthcare

UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic stated in April 2020 following the floods affecting Uvira and its surroundings:

UNHCR is concerned over the large number of people left homeless by the flooding and exposed to sickness and disease. While no cases of COVID-19 have reached Uvira so far, the risk of cholera has heightened, as it is endemic to the area.⁶²⁷

UNOCHA, reporting in May 2020 on the situation in and around the town of Uvira following

⁶²² UNHCR, [Massive floods in DRC's South Kivu impact 80,000 people, kill dozens](#), 21 April 2020

⁶²³ UNOCHA, [REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO, Inondations à Uvira : Rapport de situation #2](#), 7 May 2020, p. 1 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶²⁴ World Food Programme (WFP), [Global Report on Food Crises - 2021](#), 5 May 2021, p. 130

⁶²⁵ World Food Programme (WFP), [Global Report on Food Crises - 2021](#), 5 May 2021, p. 133

⁶²⁶ World Food Programme (WFP), [Global Report on Food Crises - 2021](#), 5 May 2021, p. 133

⁶²⁷ UNHCR, [Massive floods in DRC's South Kivu impact 80,000 people, kill dozens](#), 21 April 2020

floods in April-May 2020 [unofficial translation]:

Most of the flooded areas are in a cholera-endemic region and the risk of waterborne diseases is high. At present, the area has a response capacity for over 1,000 cases of cholera. Around ten health centres, identified to provide free health care to the victims, need support in terms of medicines. Partners in the area are providing access to free care in 13 health facilities for children aged 0-59 months, pregnant and lactating women, and the elderly. At least five health centres/posts have been totally destroyed and need to be rebuilt and re-equipped; several others need to be rehabilitated and sanitised.⁶²⁸

11.2.4. Access to education

The Congolese civil society movement Lutte pour le changement (LUCHA) noted in November 2019 that “ the number of children forced into the worst forms of work by the social situation is alarming. In South Kivu, children are still concentrated in the mines, in the brick-making quarries, especially in the large part of the island territory of Idjwi, in the night-time fishing activities on Lake Kivu, in the transport of sand to Bukavu and Goma from Idjwi”.⁶²⁹

UNOCHA, reporting in May 2020 on the situation in and around the town of Uvira following floods in April-May 2020 [unofficial translation]:

To date, at least 45 schools have been completely destroyed by the waters, while 13 others are out of use, serving as accommodation sites for the affected families. Apart from the need to rebuild and equip these schools with school materials, the sanitation of the school space and the reconstruction of latrines and water points still need to be carried out.⁶³⁰

Basing its analysis on COI compiled by a range of sources as well as on a review of recent rapid needs assessments undertaken in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika, the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) reported in October 2020:

Schools across the country noted an increase in class size since the introduction of the national free primary school policy, putting pressure on already strained resources and infrastructure, as well as on teachers’ morale (GoDRC 2020, Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 09/2020). This policy has compounded issues of overcrowding in schools hosting significant numbers of displaced students. Reports from Ituri province repeatedly highlight this issue, stating that student-teacher ratios are reaching highs of 92 to 1 and preventing the delivery of quality education (Samaritan’s Purse, 05/2020; PPSSP, UNICEF 13/03/2020). In some areas, schools had no capacity to accommodate most displaced children prior to COVID-19 closures. As schools reopen, these students risk remaining cut off from education (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 05/08/2020). In conflict affected areas of Kalonge and Nindja, South Kivu, and across Ituri province, children did not have appropriate school kits (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 09/2020). Lack of sufficient school furniture, including desks and chairs, also limits the capacity to accommodate IDPs and provide a good standard of education (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 07/08/2020; Unknown/OCHA 06/2020). An evaluation in Kalonge and Nindja also noted that teachers were not appropriately trained due to frequent forced displacement (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 09/2020) [...]

⁶²⁸ UNOCHA, [REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO, Inondations à Uvira : Rapport de situation #2](#), 7 May 2020, p. 2 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶²⁹ LUCHA, [Orientation Strategique Pour L’elimination Des Pires Formes De Travail Des Enfants Au Sud-Kivu](#), 1 November 2019

⁶³⁰ UNOCHA, [REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO, Inondations à Uvira : Rapport de situation #2](#), 7 May 2020, p. 3 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

Evaluation also recorded schools being directly damaged by violence, including in 11 zones de santé in Kalonge, South Kivu (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 09/2020). There are nine primary and secondary schools that require reconstruction of some kind in Nindja, South Kivu, an area with existing significant education gaps.⁶³¹

11.3. Ituri

11.3.1. Access to housing

Beyond the information included under section [12.3.1. Access to housing](#) [for IDPs in Ituri], no specific additional information was found amongst the sources consulted within the time frame for this report.

11.3.2. Access to livelihood

In an information note covering the period between 5 to 15 November 2019, UNOCHA stated that [unofficial translations] “22,36,508 people are food insecure in phases 3 and 4 in Ituri with an estimated population of 50,586,61 (IPC 17)”.⁶³²

In its Global Report on Food Crises 2021, the World Food Programme (WFP) reported that “In July-December 2020 [...] the provinces of Ituri [...] contained the largest number of people in Crisis or worse (IPC Phase 3 or above)”.⁶³³

The same source further reported that “Households experienced the destruction or theft of crops by armed groups or were prevented from accessing their fields. These factors were expected to produce lower-than-normal harvests, limiting the food production capacity of subsistence households and increasing their dependence on markets (FEWS NET, October 2020)”.⁶³⁴

11.3.3. Access to healthcare

In an information note covering the period between 2 to 9 September 2019, UNOCHA noted that [unofficial translation]:

The humanitarian situation in Djugu Territory thus remains precarious. In Ituri, the provincial health authorities announced that all 36 health zones in the province have recorded at least one case of measles since the beginning of the year [2019], bringing the total number of cases to almost 7,800. Only 13 health zones have been able to organise response activities. In June [2019], the Ministry of Health declared a nationwide epidemic. The measles epidemic and the persistence of Ebola in the health zones of Ituri are just two of the humanitarian challenges facing the Congolese authorities and their partners

In an information note covering the period between 5 to 15 November 2019, UNOCHA stated

⁶³¹ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Education & Child Protection Challenges in Eastern DRC: Impact of COVID-19, Conflict and Policy Reform](#), October 2020, p. 6

⁶³² UNOCHA, [Note d'informations humanitaires pour les provinces du Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, de l'Ituri et la Tshopo](#), 15 November 2019, p. 2 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶³³ World Food Programme (WFP), [Global Report on Food Crises - 2021](#), 5 May 2021, p. 130

⁶³⁴ World Food Programme (WFP), [Global Report on Food Crises - 2021](#), 5 May 2021, p. 133

that [unofficial translations] fistula recorded in Ituri are awaiting medical attention since 2017 (DPS)".⁶³⁵

In its 2021 report covering the period 2 December 2020 to 18 March 2021, the UN Secretary-General noted that "the bubonic plague is resurgent in Ituri".⁶³⁶

11.3.4. Access to education

Basing its analysis on COI compiled by a range of sources as well as on a review of recent rapid needs assessments undertaken in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika, the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) reported in October 2020:

Schools across the country noted an increase in class size since the introduction of the national free primary school policy, putting pressure on already strained resources and infrastructure, as well as on teachers' morale (GoDRC 2020, Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 09/2020). This policy has compounded issues of overcrowding in schools hosting significant numbers of displaced students. Reports from Ituri province repeatedly highlight this issue, stating that student-teacher ratios are reaching highs of 92 to 1 and preventing the delivery of quality education (Samaritan's Purse, 05/2020; PPSP, UNICEF 13/03/2020). In some areas, schools had no capacity to accommodate most displaced children prior to COVID-19 closures. As schools reopen, these students risk remaining cut off from education (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 05/08/2020). In conflict affected areas of Kalonge and Nindja, South Kivu, and across Ituri province, children did not have appropriate school kits (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 09/2020). [...]

An evaluation in Kalonge and Nindja also noted that teachers were not appropriately trained due to frequent forced displacement (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 09/2020).⁶³⁷

12. Situation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Eastern DRC

The following is a non-exhaustive list of sources that produce regular updates on the humanitarian situation in the DRC, which may be consulted for the most up-to-date information:

- [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(UNOCHA\)](#)
- [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(UNOCHA\)](#), Situation Reports (in French)
- [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(UNOCHA\)](#), Humanitarian Bulletins (in French)
- [UNICEF](#), Monthly situation reports

The following databases are also useful to consult:

- [Assessment Capacities Project \(ACAPS\)](#), DRC specific page
- [Humanitarian Response](#), DRC specific page
- [Reliefweb](#), DRC specific page

⁶³⁵ UNOCHA, [Note d'informations humanitaires pour les provinces du Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, de l'Ituri et la Tshopo](#), 15 November 2019, p. 2 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶³⁶ UN Security Council, [United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 March 2021, para. 31

⁶³⁷ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Education & Child Protection Challenges in Eastern DRC: Impact of COVID-19, Conflict and Policy Reform](#), October 2020, p. 6

Overview in the DRC generally and eastern DRC specifically

Reviewing the humanitarian needs and response in the DRC for 2019, UNOCHA noted in December 2019:

With more than five million displaced people to date, the DRC is the African country most affected by internal displacement. North Kivu is home to more than one million IDPs, making it the most affected province; Ituri and South Kivu provinces have recorded more than 900,000 and 850,000 IDPs respectively. All these population movements [...] are mostly linked to insecurity and violence caused by recurrent armed clashes. Nevertheless, over the past 18 months, humanitarian actors have noted that more than two million people have returned to their original homes. The country is also home to over 517,000 refugees from neighbouring countries.⁶³⁸

The U.S. Department of State's annual human rights report covering 2020 noted that:

Conflict, insecurity, and poor infrastructure adversely affected humanitarian efforts to assist IDPs. In August [2020], UNHCR stated there were 1.7 million IDPs in Ituri Province; the agency had no access to certain zones in the region due to insecurity and inability to travel. Due to lack of funding, the humanitarian response plan for the country targeted only half of the persons in need in Ituri Province. Population displacements continued, particularly in the east. Many areas with IDPs continued to experience insecurity, such as North Kivu's Beni Territory, Ituri Province, South Kivu's Fizi Territory [...] Intercommunal violence and fighting among armed groups in the east resulted in continued population displacement and increased humanitarian needs for IDPs and host communities.⁶³⁹

The same source further noted, "Fighting between the FARDC and IAGs as well as among IAGs continued to displace populations and limit humanitarian access, particularly in Ituri Province; Rutshuru, Masisi, Walikale, Lubero, Beni, and Nyiragongo territories in North Kivu Province; South Kivu Province [...]"⁶⁴⁰

With regards to human rights violations experienced by IDPs, the US Department of State report stated: "Continuing conflict in North and South Kivu, Ituri, [...] Provinces harmed refugees and IDPs in the regions, with attacks often resulting in deaths and further displacement".⁶⁴¹

During a press briefing in June 2020, UNHCR spokesperson Babar Baloch reported that "In the last eight weeks, UNHCR and its partners have recorded multiple attacks by armed groups on displacement sites and villages, mainly in Djugu Territory in Ituri, in Fizi and Mwenga Territories in South Kivu province and Masisi and Rutshuru Territories, North Kivu province. Violence has displaced more than one million people in the last six months in these areas".⁶⁴²

⁶³⁸ UNOCHA, [*Le Gouvernement Congolais Et La Communauté Humanitaire Dressent Le Bilan De 2019 Et Sollicitent Plus De Fonds Pour La Réponse Humanitaire En 2020*](#), 19 December 2020, p.1

⁶³⁹ U.S. Department of State, [*2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 30 March 2021, *section e. Status and Treatment of Internally Displaced Persons*

⁶⁴⁰ U.S. Department of State, [*2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 1. G, Abuses in internal conflict*

⁶⁴¹ U.S. Department of State, [*2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 1. F. Protection of refugees*

⁶⁴² UNHCR, [*UNHCR appalled at rising violence against displaced in eastern DRC*](#), 30 June 2020

UNHCR spokesperson Shabia Mantoo noted early October 2020 that “UNHCR [...] is rushing support to tens of thousands of people who have been recently displaced in the aftermath of brutal attacks and fighting by the armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s North Kivu and Ituri provinces. More than 50,000 people have fled in the aftermath of a recent upsurge in fighting in North Kivu. The displaced include an overwhelming number of children – including many who are unaccompanied by either a parent or guardian”.⁶⁴³

Basing its analysis on country information compiled by a range of sources as well as on a review of recent rapid needs assessments undertaken in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika, ACAPS reported in October 2020 that “IDPs & refugees are particularly vulnerable both to further education disruptions and also to the negative impacts of school closures” and that “Serious protection risks are present for children who are out of school, including forced labour, marriage, abuse, and recruitment”.⁶⁴⁴

According to UNOCHA, as of 31 December 2020, there were 1.201 million IDPs in North Kivu and Ituri, whose major causes of displacements were land disputes and inter-community conflicts (11%); attacks and armed conflicts (86%); natural disaster (3%).⁶⁴⁵ According to a UNHCR’s press briefing in February 2021, « More than 88,000 displaced people reside in 22 sites supported by UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Many others live in spontaneous sites – while some 90 per cent are accommodated in host communities”.⁶⁴⁶

UNHCR reported in January 2021 in relation to North and South Kivu:

This year [2021], some 35,000 families comprised of 175,000 individuals in North and South Kivu have received shelter support from UNHCR. This includes emergency and communal shelters, transitional houses and rental subsidies. So far, 15,000 families have completed their shelters while 20,000 more are currently under construction.

But a severe lack of funding threatens to reduce UNHCR’s ability to assist those in need next year.

The shelter budget for North and South Kivu will shrink by at least 85 per cent in 2021, leaving thousands of families without a roof over their heads. The community-based protection budget will also fall by 57 per cent, hampering UNHCR’s ability to respond to local communities’ needs and promote peaceful coexistence and women’s empowerment.⁶⁴⁷

Basing its analysis on country information compiled by a range of sources ACAPS provided in March 2021 the following overview of the humanitarian situation in the DRC:

A complex emergency has persisted in DRC for more than 20 years. Population displacement is frequent and repeated, and mostly driven by armed clashes and intercommunal violence between foreign, self-defence, and other armed groups. More than 5 million people are internally displaced. The situation in the eastern provinces remains particularly volatile; humanitarian needs are projected to be higher in 2021 than at the beginning of 2020, as displaced and local populations are faced with violence, food insecurity, floods, disease

⁶⁴³ UNHCR, [Thousands flee armed group attacks in eastern DR Congo](#), 9 October 2020

⁶⁴⁴ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Education & child protection challenges in Eastern DRC Impact of COVID-19, conflict and policy reform](#), 19 October 2020

⁶⁴⁵ UNOCHA, [Deterioration of the humanitarian situation: Beni, Mambasa and Irumu Territories](#), 2 March 2021

⁶⁴⁶ UNHCR, [UNHCR alarmed at armed atrocities in eastern DR Congo](#), 16 February 2021

⁶⁴⁷ UNHCR, [Hosts offer vital refuge to families fleeing DRC violence](#), 13 January 2021

outbreaks, and the secondary effects of COVID-19 restrictions. Over 941,000 refugees from DRC live in African host countries. DRC also hosts about 527,000 refugees, mainly from Rwanda, Central African Republic, Congo, and Angola. Since mid-December 2020, 92,000 refugees fleeing violence related to the 27 December [2020] elections in CAR have arrived in Bas-Uele, Nord-Ubangi, and Sud-Ubangi provinces. Most of the arrivals are located in villages close to the river border, where access is a challenge and where host communities were already struggling to meet their own needs.⁶⁴⁸

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) published its IRC Watchlist 2021 on 12 March 2021 and wrote on the DRC Country Profile that “In the first half of 2020, over 1.4 million people were displaced by conflict in eastern DRC, mostly in North Kivu and Ituri; this total is second only to Syria globally (IDMC)”.

12.1. North Kivu

UNHCR noted at the end of November 2019 that “According to official estimates, the city of Beni is home to almost half-a-million people. There are some 275,000 displaced people in the territory. With ongoing insecurity, many have been left stranded at the mercy of the armed groups. The current insecurity adds to an already-complex displacement situation in North Kivu, with an existing 1.5 million internally displaced persons by the conflict and ongoing efforts to fight the deadly Ebola virus”.⁶⁴⁹

The same source stated:

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and its humanitarian partners remain extremely concerned for the safety and security of hundreds of thousands of civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s eastern Beni Territory, after deadly violence and mass protests have cut off humanitarian access to the troubled region.

Tensions in this part of DRC’s North Kivu province have been rising since the launch of a government-led security operation against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) on October 30 [2019]. Armed groups have been targeting civilians and displaced populations in the region, killing scores of people.

Growing estimates are that at least 100 people were reported to have been killed in violent attacks in the Beni region since November 2 [2019], with thousands displaced, the vast majority of them women and children. Additional mass displacements have been reported from Mbau and Oicha localities, north of Beni. People are taking refuge in the Beni town, in an attempt to flee attacks, and the ongoing fighting between the army of the DRC and ADF.⁶⁵⁰

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported in December 2019 that “According to recent estimates, more than 687,000 people are living in camps for internally displaced people or are being hosted by local families in the territories of Masisi, Rutshuru and Walikale”.⁶⁵¹

At the end of June 2020 UNHCR reported that “[...] just in a day on 23 June [2020], almost 5,000 people were forced to flee their homes in North Kivu province, due to ongoing fighting between two armed groups in Mweso town. Attackers looted schools where people had fled

⁶⁴⁸ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [DRC - Overview](#), 12 March 2021

⁶⁴⁹ UNHCR, [As violence spikes in DRC, UNHCR concerned for trapped civilians](#), 29 November 2019

⁶⁵⁰ UNHCR, [As violence spikes in DRC, UNHCR concerned for trapped civilians](#), 29 November 2019

⁶⁵¹ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [Extra humanitarian assistance urgently needed in southern North Kivu crisis](#), 16 December 2019

to. Armed groups are presently occupying dozens of villages”.⁶⁵²

In early October 2020, UNHCR stated:

Brutal attacks blamed on the armed group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) killed at least 13 people at a site hosting forcibly displaced people in Mbau village, Beni Territory, on September 21 [2020]. In fear for their lives, many others fled from the nearby fields where they were working, leaving everything behind. The following day, the same armed group reportedly looted and burnt down a health clinic at Musuku village. A health practitioner and several other civilians have not been seen since September 22.⁶⁵³

UNOCHA states in its report on the humanitarian situation in North-Kivu between 28 December 2020 and 3 January 2021 that [unofficial translation]:

[...] Masisi Territory: For the past two weeks, there has been a lull in certain localities formerly affected by the clashes, notably Loashi, Bonde and Bukombo. This has allowed the return of more than 11,825 people, including 6,825 people in central Masisi, according to local authorities and humanitarian sources. This return does not represent a lasting improvement in the situation, as several factors risk causing a resumption of violence and forcing these returnees and others to return to their homes.⁶⁵⁴

The same source further noted [unofficial translation]:

[...] Population movements

Presence of around 2,300 new displaced households in the Kanyabayonga groupement in Rutshuru territory: Sources close to civil society and associative movements in Bwito report the arrival of around 1,11615 new displaced persons in several localities in the Kanyabayonga groupement, in the Bwit chiefdom in Rutshuru territory, including Lusogha, Mirangi, Birundule, Kyaghala, and Iyobora. These figures can be confirmed by an assessment as the movements have not yet stabilised. These displaced persons fled recent clashes on 1 January 2021 between armed groups in several villages in the Ikobo groupement in Walikale territory, notably the villages of Bukumbirwa, Buleusa and Kateku. Around 10,000 newly displaced in the town of Beni: More than 10,000 households were newly displaced in the four communes (Bungulu, Mulekera, Ruwenzori and Beu) of Beni, between 25 and 30 December 2020, to escape armed violence in Nzenga, Mutwanga, Loselose and Bulongo, in the Mutwanga health zone, in the east of Beni territory. Almost 99% of these displaced people are living with host families. A rapid multi-sectoral assessment, led by the territorial sub-cluster of Protection of Beni-Lubero, has been planned for 6 January.⁶⁵⁵

In its subsequent report, covering the period 4 and 10 January 2021, UNOCHA reported:

Lubero territory

Tension persists between two armed groups operating in the south-western part of Lubero territory, on the border with Walikale territory, following clashes between 29 December and 2 January. In addition, these armed groups committed several abuses against civilians, such as collecting illegal taxes and stealing livestock.

⁶⁵² UNHCR, [UNHCR appalled at rising violence against displaced in eastern DRC](#), 30 June 2020

⁶⁵³ UNHCR, [Thousands flee armed group attacks in eastern DR Congo](#), 9 October 2020

⁶⁵⁴ UNOCHA, [République Démocratique du Congo Note d'informations humanitaires pour la province du Nord-Kivu](#), 5 January 2021, p. 1 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶⁵⁵ UNOCHA, [République Démocratique du Congo Note d'informations humanitaires pour la province du Nord-Kivu](#), 5 January 2021, p. 2 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

In addition, the armed groups of Bapfuna and Bashali Kahembe interrupted the relative calm that had prevailed after the 23 December clashes in the Biiri groupement. One of them targeted a position of the Congolese National Police, 18 km north of central Masisi. The violence caused preventive movements of people, the numbers of which are not yet determined. As a reminder, the clashes in Masisi territory are said to have caused the displacement of around 22,245 people between November and December 2020, of whom 6920 are housed in the rural commune of Masisi where they have been accommodated in collective centres and in host families.

The Beni Protection Sub-Cluster, with the support of UNOCHA and 25 humanitarian organisations, conducted a multi-sectoral rapid assessment in the four communes of Beni town on 6 January. The objective of this RRA was to identify the priority humanitarian needs of the 12,000 IDPs who recently arrived in the town in December 2020 following armed violence in the localities of Nzenga, Mutwanga, Bulongo, Mwenda, Loselose and Ntoma, in the Mutwanga health zone in the east of Beni territory.⁶⁵⁶

Between 11 and 17 January 2021 the Commission Mouvement de Populations (CMP) reported that there were [unofficial translation] “1,795,609 internally displaced persons in North Kivu [...] [and] 755,992 returnees in North Kivu (CMP -10 Dec 2020)”.⁶⁵⁷

In February 2021 UNHCR stated that:

[...] killings and kidnappings have continued in North Kivu in 2021, where attacks have also been directed against displaced civilians. On 24 January [2021], an armed group killed two men and seriously injured six others in an incursion into a site for forcibly displaced people in North Kivu’s Masisi Territory.

A week prior to the recent attack, three people living in Kivuye displacement site in Masisi Territory, which is supported by UNHCR, were kidnapped during raids by an armed group. This group has also imposed a 7 p.m. curfew in the area, after which they visit the residents’ houses to force ‘security’ payments.⁶⁵⁸

In March 2021 the same source reported:

Since January [2021], attacks blamed on the armed group, Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), have killed nearly 200 people, injured dozens of others, and displaced an estimated 40,000 people in DRC’s Beni Territory in North Kivu province as well as nearby villages in Ituri province.[...] Those forcibly displaced this month have fled to Oicha, Beni and Butembo towns in Beni Territory, with many fleeing on motorbikes. The majority are women and children, as men stay behind to protect properties, exposing themselves to the risk of further attacks. Displaced people are living in dire conditions without shelter, food, water or health care. In the context of Ebola and COVID-19, the lack of access to toilets, clean water, soap and menstrual hygiene products is of particular concern. In addition, families do not have enough essential items like blankets, sleeping mats or cooking materials.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁶ UNOCHA, [République Démocratique du Congo, Note d’informations humanitaires pour la province du Nord-Kivu](#), 11 January, pp. 1-2

⁶⁵⁷ UNOCHA, [République Démocratique du Congo, Note d’informations humanitaires pour la province du Nord-Kivu](#), 17 janvier 2021, p. 2

⁶⁵⁸ UNHCR, [UNHCR alarmed at armed atrocities in eastern DR Congo](#), 16 February 2021

⁶⁵⁹ UNHCR, [Armed attacks kill hundreds, displace 40,000 civilians in northeast DR Congo](#), 19 March 2021

For the latest report [in French], including infographics, on the humanitarian situation in North Kivu, as reported by REACH see REACH, [Suivi de la situation humanitaire, Province du Nord-Kivu, République démocratique du Congo \(RDC\)](#), June 2021.

12.1.1. Access to housing

UNHCR noted in February 2020 the “worsening conditions for newly displaced” in North Kivu and further stated:

The majority of those forced to flee in the latest wave of violence are now being sheltered by local host communities in Nobili town who have welcomed displaced families without hesitation but lack resources to even meet their own needs.

Others took refuge in overcrowded schools and churches around Nobili town. UNHCR and partners are providing them with emergency shelter assistance which is also enabling schools to be returned to their normal purpose.

Thousands more are living in dire conditions across a hundred or so informal settlements, sleeping in huts made of branches. They are exposed to the elements and face serious threats to their safety and protection, including from the lack of privacy.

The vast majority of those displaced are women and children who, along with other internally displaced people (IDPs) remain in urgent need of basic assistance and protection. Key needs include food, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene and access to education.⁶⁶⁰

Reporting on the humanitarian situation in North-Kivu between 25 August and 7 September 2020, UNOCHA stated [unofficial translation]:

More than 3,700 people were displaced from their villages to the centre of Mamove in the aftermath of an attack on 25 August 2020. In Rutshuru territory, fighting between armed actors has resumed since 24 August [2020]. The fighting in the Bukombo and Binza clusters has led to the forced displacement of more than 6,000 people to the centre of Bukombo. These people are staying with host families, as well as in social and religious facilities such as the general hospital, schools and churches. Some of them are former IDPs who have returned to their villages in the last two months.⁶⁶¹

Basing its analysis on country information compiled by a range of sources as well as on a review of recent rapid needs assessments, ACAPS reported in October 2020 that “[...] The reopening of schools in August 2020 is likely to have increased both shelter and education needs where suitable alternative arrangements for IDPs residing in school buildings have not been made”.⁶⁶²

UNHCR spokesperson Babar Baloch gave a press briefing in February 2021, stating that “In 2020, UNHCR was able to build more than 43,000 family shelters in eastern DRC. In 2021, with the funding currently available, only 4,400 families can be assisted out of hundreds of thousands in need”.⁶⁶³

⁶⁶⁰ UNHCR, [UNHCR alarmed about worsening conditions for newly displaced in eastern DRC](#), 11 February 2020

⁶⁶¹ UNOCHA, [République Démocratique du Congo, Note d'informations humanitaires pour la province du Nord-Kivu](#), 7 September 2020, p. 1 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶⁶² Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Education & child protection challenges in Eastern DRC Impact of COVID-19, conflict and policy reform](#), 19 October 2020, p. 6

⁶⁶³ UNHCR, [UNHCR alarmed at armed atrocities in eastern DR Congo](#), 16 February 2021

12.1.2. Access to livelihood

Covering the humanitarian situation in North-Kivu between 25 August and 7 September 2020 UNOCHA reported that [unofficial translation]:

Armed men looted nearly 150 houses where internally displaced people were living in the aftermath of an assistance distribution in Kalembe-Kalonge, a crossroads between Walikale, Masisi and Rutshuru territories. Nearly 3,000 displaced households were assisted with essential household items by UNICEF and the Red Cross from 30 to 31 August 2020. The priority needs of these people include protection, food, health care, clean water, as well as access to adequate hygiene and sanitation.⁶⁶⁴

UNHCR stated that “In November 2020, armed groups introduced illegal taxes on people who want to access their farms in their villages of origin in Rutshuru Territory. This has cut off many from their only source of food and income. The displaced people cannot afford to pay these imposed taxes as they have no income, thereby compounding the situation”.⁶⁶⁵

12.1.3. Access to healthcare

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported in December 2019 about the situation of IDPs in North Kivu:

From January to September 2019, MSF teams working in the territories of Masisi, Rutshuru and Walikale treated more than 11,220 malnourished children, 2,310 victims of sexual violence and 1,980 people with weapons injuries. Despite this critical situation, these territories – often referred to as the ‘Little North’ of North Kivu in the aid sector – suffer from a glaring lack of assistance from humanitarian organisations.⁶⁶⁶

UNOCHA stated in its report on the humanitarian situation in North-Kivu between 11 and 17 January 2021 that [unofficial translation]:

Water-Hygiene-Sanitation: As part of its humanitarian response project in Water, Hygiene and Sanitation for displaced and returnee populations and host communities in the health zones of Bambo and Birambizo, the NGO HYFRO is conducting a 9-month project, which runs from October 2020 to July 2021. This area is home to several IDP sites that lack health and sanitation infrastructure. In addition, it has a poor supply of drinking water, leading to frequent cases of diarrhoea.⁶⁶⁷

Basing its analysis on country information compiled by a range of sources as well as on a review of recent rapid needs, ACAPS reported in October 2020:

⁶⁶⁴ UNOCHA, [République Démocratique du Congo, Note d'informations humanitaires pour la province du Nord-Kivu](#), p. 2 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶⁶⁵ UNHCR, [UNHCR alarmed at armed atrocities in eastern DR Congo](#), 16 February 2021

⁶⁶⁶ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [Extra humanitarian assistance urgently needed in southern North Kivu crisis](#), 16 December 2019

⁶⁶⁷ UNOCHA, [République Démocratique du Congo, Note d'informations humanitaires pour la province du Nord-Kivu](#), 17 janvier 2021 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

Assessments in several provinces, including South Kivu and North Kivu, noted that amongst IDP households, children had no play areas or psychosocial support which may be particularly harmful, considering the high likelihood of exposure to trauma (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 09/2020; AVSI 07/2020).⁶⁶⁸

12.1.4. Access to education

See also section [9.2.2. Access to education](#) [under section 9.2. *Conflict-related violence directed against children*].

UNHCR noted in February 2020 the “worsening conditions for newly displaced” in North Kivu, notably concerning access to education:

A large number of displaced children are not attending school. Schools either do not have the capacity to host additional pupils or are closed because they are now sheltering IDPs, placing a huge strain on already inadequate educational infrastructure.

Mambale school in Nobili currently hosts 500 displaced students, bringing the total number of students to 800. The school now runs double shifts with pupils attending either in the morning or the afternoon.⁶⁶⁹

Basing its analysis on COI compiled by a range of sources as well as on a review of recent rapid needs assessments undertaken in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika, the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) reported in October 2020:

IDPs fleeing violence and residing in schools was a phenomenon identified in several provinces, including North Kivu. An evaluation from Oicha Commune, Beni, North Kivu documented 795 IDP households occupying schools after fleeing violence – this has reportedly been ongoing since 2016, with IDP households frequently seeking safety in schools (ACOPE/ASBL 23/06/2020). This led to the further dilapidation of school infrastructure and loss of teaching material, impacting approximately 4,000 students who depend on it (AVSI 07/2020, UNHCR, CARITAS, AVSI 27/03/2020).

It is unknown if IDPs have left or remain since school closures have been lifted. The reopening of schools in August 2020 is likely to have increased both shelter and education needs where suitable alternative arrangements for IDPs residing in school buildings have not been made).⁶⁷⁰

12.2. South Kivu

UNOCHA’s coordinator in the DRC, Mr David McLachlan-Karr declared in September 2019 [unofficial translation] :

its deep concern at the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in the Fizi/Itombwe Highlands, as well as in Mwenga, South Kivu, over the past few weeks, where the social fabric between communities is deteriorating with each passing day. Community tensions this week have led to additional population movements and the suspension of the activities of many humanitarian actors for security reasons, depriving more than 50,000 people in the

⁶⁶⁸ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Education & child protection challenges in Eastern DRC: Impact of COVID-19, conflict and policy reform](#), 19 October 2020, p. 7

⁶⁶⁹ UNHCR, [UNHCR alarmed about worsening conditions for newly displaced in eastern DRC](#), 11 February 2020

⁶⁷⁰ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Education & Child Protection Challenges in Eastern DRC: Impact of COVID-19, Conflict and Policy Reform](#), October 2020, p. 6

Fizi/Itombwe Highlands region of essential humanitarian assistance. In addition, this new wave of displacement is jeopardising the start of the school year for almost 20,000 primary school children.⁶⁷¹

In April 2020 UNHCR reported on the “Significant rainfall in South Kivu’s Uvira town and its surroundings” and found that:

These floods have further affected a weak road network in and around South Kivu with many bridges being destroyed or damaged. This further hampers access to the affected people, who include the displaced and refugees.⁶⁷²

The same source also noted that “South Kivu continues to see large displacement due to insecurity and conflict. The region currently hosts nearly one million internally displaced people out of the DRC’s more than five million internally displaced”.⁶⁷³

At the end of June 2020 UNHCR reported that “In South Kivu, a displacement site in Mikenge, Mwenga Territory, has been attacked twice by armed groups in May and June [2020]. The same site had been used by members of an armed group to hide, putting the civilian character of the site into jeopardy even though the residents had no way to stop the militia’s actions”.⁶⁷⁴

An analytical note published by OHCHR-MONUSCO covering the period between February 2019 and June 2020 in the highlands of Mwenga, Fizi and Uvira territories found:

The humanitarian situation is also concerning. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), more than 110,000 people, mainly women and children, have been displaced in the areas of Itombwe, Mikenge and Minembwe due to insecurity since February 2019. Currently, there are 1,350 displaced families in the Minembwe commune and its surroundings, with a total of 8,300 people in need of emergency humanitarian assistance in IDP sites and host families. In addition, approximately 12,000 displaced persons have been identified by humanitarian actors on the Fizi-Lulimba road. The IDPs in Mikenge have not yet been identified and registered. Humanitarian assistance has been limited due to poor roads and insecurity. Since the start of 2020, eight attacks on humanitarian actors have been documented in the area, including three in March and April and two in May. Recent restrictions on freedom of movement put in place as part of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have had the effect of further restricting humanitarian access, with a special travel authorization being now required.

The destruction of houses and livelihoods, combined with forced displacement, have prevented displaced communities from cultivating their land, increasing the risk of famine in the highlands.⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷¹ UNOCHA, [*Le Coordonnateur Humanitaire En Republique Democratique Du Congo Condamne Les Recentes Violences Contre Les Civils En Ituri Et Dans Le Sud-Kivu*](#), 13 September 2019, p. 1 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶⁷² UNHCR, [*Massive floods in DRC’s South Kivu impact 80,000 people, kill dozens*](#), 21 April 2020

⁶⁷³ UNHCR, [*Massive floods in DRC’s South Kivu impact 80,000 people, kill dozens*](#), 21 April 2020

⁶⁷⁴ UNHCR, [*UNHCR appalled at rising violence against displaced in eastern DRC*](#), 30 June 2020

⁶⁷⁵ OHCHR-MONUSCO, [*Analytical note on the human rights situation in the highlands of Mwenga, Fizi and Uvira territories, South Kivu province, between February 2019 and June 2020*](#), August 2020, paras. 14 and 15

In early October 2020 UNHCR reporting that “UNHCR is also assisting forcibly displaced people in Pinga, an area in North Kivu, where ongoing fighting has reached an alarming stage endangering innocent lives. Clashes following the split of different factions within the NDC/R armed group have displaced between 40,000 - 60,000 people since July [2020]”.⁶⁷⁶

The World Health Organization (WHO)’s Health Cluster on the DRC produced an information note in early May 2021, which stated about the Bukavu “hub” [unofficial translation]:

More than 2,000 displaced persons were recorded in the high and middle plateaux of Lemera in the territory of Uvira, caused by clashes between local armed groups that began on 22 April 2021 and continued until 24 April 2021. Several houses were also reportedly burnt down in the villages of Kifune, Bijogo, Gasu and Gongwe. The displaced who had taken refuge in these surrounding villages were forced to flee again; The persistence of insecurity in Shabunda territory (Lulingu and Mulungu areas). Insecurity due to the activism of armed groups, illustrated by attacks, looting and sexual violence in this forest region full of minerals, is the main cause of population displacement. This is particularly the case in the village of Kigulube. Due to difficult accessibility, humanitarians have completely deserted the area leaving the population in severe precariousness.⁶⁷⁷

For the latest report [in French], including infographics, on the humanitarian situation in South Kivu, as reported by REACH see REACH, [Suivi de la situation humanitaire Province du Sud Kivu, République démocratique du Congo \(RDC\)](#), June 2021.

12.2.1. Access to housing

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported in January 2021 about living conditions of displaced individuals in South Kivu:

In the last two years, the unrest in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has forced thousands of people to flee their homes. Many have found refuge on the other side of the border between North and South Kivu, where they share limited resources and land with equally vulnerable communities.

“We heard that there was peace in Katasomwa, so we decided to come here,” says Justin, a displaced person in this remote area of Kalehe Territory, South Kivu, where there is no basic infrastructure. “Many people were killed along the way. Since we got here, in July, we have had trouble finding food. We are constantly under threat from heavy rain and the shelters we live in can burn down at any time. Our lives are miserable”.⁶⁷⁸

12.2.2. Access to livelihood

Amongst the sources consulted within the timeframe for this report no specific information in relation to South Kivu was located.

⁶⁷⁶ UNHCR, [Thousands flee armed group attacks in eastern DR Congo](#), 9 October 2020

⁶⁷⁷ World Health Organization (WHO), [Health Cluster: République Démocratique du Congo: Cluster Santé Sitrep S16 2021](#), 3 May 2021, p. 3 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶⁷⁸ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [South Kivu: An endless flight](#), 28 January 2021

12.2.3. Access to healthcare

Basing its analysis on country information compiled by a range of sources as well as on a review of recent rapid needs, the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) reported in October 2020:

Assessments in several provinces, including South Kivu and North Kivu, noted that amongst IDP households, children had no play areas or psychosocial support which may be particularly harmful, considering the high likelihood of exposure to trauma (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 09/2020; AVSI 07/2020).⁶⁷⁹

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported in January 2021 about living conditions of displaced individuals in South-Kivu:

Most of the displaced people in Mushunguti, Ramba and Bushaku are women and children. After the ordeal of life on the road and the living conditions in displacement sites such as Katasomwa, they fall sick very quickly. Diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections and intestinal parasitosis are widespread and many children are severely malnourished. The arrival of displaced populations has been a challenge for the fledgling health system. The Katasomwa health post is run by motivated staff but it lacks adequate means. “Displaced women avoided coming to the health post because they have no money to pay for care,” says head nurse Esther Isabayo Benimana. “Many gave birth in the camp, and some died that way”.⁶⁸⁰

12.2.4. Access to education

See also section [9.2.2. Access to education](#) [under section 9.2. *Conflict-related violence directed against children*].

Basing its analysis on country information compiled by a range of sources as well as on a review of recent rapid needs assessments, the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) reported in October 2020 that “In particular, IDP children in South Kivu were identified as not having access to schooling prior to the pandemic (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 09/2020)”.⁶⁸¹

The same source further noted:

In Ituri province, over 50,000 school age children were displaced by conflict after the school year began in September 2019 and had not gained access to schools in host communities before closures in March 2020. Figures for all conflict-affected areas in the province are unavailable, meaning numbers are likely to be significantly higher. These students are at particular risk of not completing their education as a result of the amount of schooling lost, difficulties in accessing education in host communities, and precarious socioeconomic conditions (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 08/08/2020).⁶⁸²

⁶⁷⁹ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Education & child protection challenges in Eastern DRC Impact of COVID-19, conflict and policy reform](#), 19 October 2020, p. 7

⁶⁸⁰ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [South Kivu: An endless flight](#), 28 January 2021

⁶⁸¹ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Education & child protection challenges in Eastern DRC Impact of COVID-19, conflict and policy reform](#), 19 October 2020, p. 5

⁶⁸² Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Education & child protection challenges in Eastern DRC Impact of COVID-19, conflict and policy reform](#), 19 October 2020, pp. 5-6

The same source indicated that in the areas of Kalonge and Nindja, South Kivu, and across Ituri province:

Lack of sufficient school furniture, including desks and chairs, also limits the capacity to accommodate IDPs and provide a good standard of education (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 07/08/2020; Unknown/OCHA 06/2020). An evaluation in Kalonge and Nindja also noted that teachers were not appropriately trained due to frequent forced displacement (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 09/2020).⁶⁸³

12.3. Ituri

Covering the period between 2 to 9 September 2019, UNOCHA noted [unofficial translation] "More than 100,000 people are reported to have been displaced within Djugu Territory as collateral victims of a security campaign launched by the Congolese armed forces, according to humanitarian actors working in the region. Humanitarian actors are concerned about the living conditions of many families, particularly those in hard-to-reach areas".⁶⁸⁴

UNOCHA's coordinator in the DRC, Mr David McLachlan-Karr declared in September 2019 that [unofficial translation]:

The humanitarian situation in Djugu territory is extremely worrying, with hundreds of thousands of people newly displaced following an upsurge in violence over the past three months as a result of the inter-communal conflicts that have been raging since December 2017." he states that "On the night of 11 to 12 September 2019, armed men raided the Duka spontaneous site, killing six people and injuring eight others. This attack is the latest in a cycle of reported armed incursions into many spontaneous sites in Djugu territory for over six months, further undermining the security and survival of already impoverished people".⁶⁸⁵

Covering the period between 17 September and 24 September 2019, UNOCHA continued to report [unofficial translation]:

Insecurity persists in several areas of Djugu Territory, Ituri, particularly in the Linga-Jiba-Laudjo-Ladedjo rectangle. Women and children are the main victims of violence perpetrated by armed gangs. Since the beginning of this month [September 2019], protection actors have noted an intensification of incursions and attacks targeting in particular the spontaneous sites of the displaced (Duko, Rho) and numerous villages. From 1 to 20 September, protection experts have recorded 223 incidents of protection and human rights, including murders among civilians, the majority of whom are displaced persons and returnees, as well as abductions. This spiral of violence has also forced households to flee their home areas to seek refuge in areas considered relatively calm. During the same period, more than 360 households moved to spontaneous settlements between Lopa and Iga Barrière and in Bunia. As insecurity continues, the vulnerability of the population increases and the humanitarian situation

⁶⁸³ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Education & child protection challenges in Eastern DRC Impact of COVID-19, conflict and policy reform](#), 19 October 2020, p. 6

⁶⁸⁴ UNOCHA, [Note d'informations humanitaires pour les provinces du Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, de l'Ituri et la Tshopo](#), 11 September 2019, p. 1 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶⁸⁵ UNOCHA, [Le Coordonnateur Humanitaire En République Démocratique Du Congo Condamne Les Recentes Violences Contre Les Civils En Ituri Et Dans Le Sud-Kivu](#), 13 September 2019, p. 1 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

worsens, leading to significant humanitarian needs. The situation is also likely to worsen in the coming months.⁶⁸⁶

In the subsequent information note covering the period between 25 September and 5 October 2019, UNOCHA noted that [unofficial translation]:

Around 340 displaced households in the Tsere site are waiting for humanitarian assistance, and there is a great need for health care, water, sanitation and shelter. Last week, the organisation installed a water source. The insecurity that prevailed last June forced many people to move to the Linga, Jiba and Blukwa areas (Djugu Territory). In Irumu Territory, more than 4,600 displaced people living in Kabarole are reportedly waiting for help, according to local humanitarian sources. These people fled insecurity in June 2019. No assistance has been organised, according to the report of the mission carried out there from 24 to 27 September [2019] by a local NGO. The needs are for food, essential household items and shelter, education, water and health.⁶⁸⁷

The same source further stated that [unofficial translation]:

IOM and UNOCHA conducted a "Go & See" visit to the Iga Barriere area (30 km north of Bunia, in Djugu Territory). The visit, which took place on 2 October [2019], was part of a humanitarian update on the situation in IDP sites coordinated by IOM. Taking advantage of the opportunity, the UNOCHA delegation met with the IDP committees of the three Lindji sites to discuss their humanitarian situation. These committees mainly expressed the need for household items, food and water and sanitation. As a reminder, nearly 5,000 IDPs have gradually arrived since February 2018 in these sites. The Lindji 2 site alone has been hosting more than 4,000 people since June 2019. For the past three months, the displaced in these three sites have had almost no humanitarian assistance.⁶⁸⁸

Echoing a joint statement from October 2019 from Action Against Hunger, AVSI, Danish Refugee Council, Intersos, Mercy Corps, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Solidarités International, Tearfund, Trócaire & Welthungerhilfe about living conditions of IDPs in Ituri, Oxfam wrote:

The majority of people who have been displaced are living with vulnerable host families, stretching already poor communities, with little or no resources, to breaking point. Others are living in cramped conditions in public places, such as churches and schools or barely surviving in overcrowded makeshift camps. The agencies said that in some instances, up to 500 people are having to share one toilet, while others are having to drink dirty water that infects them with potentially deadly water-borne diseases. Many are sleeping on bare floors in flimsy shelters that offer very little protection from heavy rains. The conditions also increase the risk of sexual violence for women and girls.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁶ UNOCHA, [*Note d'informations humanitaires pour les provinces du Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, de l'Ituri et la Tshopo*](#), 24 September 2019, p. 1 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶⁸⁷ UNOCHA, [*Note d'informations humanitaires pour les provinces du Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, de l'Ituri et la Tshopo*](#), 5 October 2019, p. 1 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶⁸⁸ UNOCHA, [*Note d'informations humanitaires pour les provinces du Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, de l'Ituri et la Tshopo*](#), 5 October 2019, p. 2 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶⁸⁹ Oxfam, [*Lean season in DR Congo: aid agencies fear for hundreds of thousands in desperate need*](#), 17 October 2019

The U.S. Department of State's annual report on human rights included information from UNHCR which reported that:

there were 1.7 million IDPs in Ituri Province; the agency had no access to certain zones in the region due to insecurity and inability to travel. Due to lack of funding, the humanitarian response plan for the country targeted only half of the persons in need in Ituri Province.⁶⁹⁰

In January 2020, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet concluded a five-day visit to the DRC and reported:

In all, there are close to 1.1 million displaced people in Ituri, including around 500,000 as a result of the Lendu-Hema conflict, with 50,000 newly displaced in the first three weeks of January [2020] alone. Only around 15 percent are in camps, with the rest taken into other people's homes.

"Displacement on that scale would be front-page news in many other parts of the world," the High Commissioner said. "When it happens in Ituri, no one outside the DRC seems to know or care."⁶⁹¹

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported in February 2020 that "approximately 200,000 people have spontaneously gathered and settled in sites where they fundamentally lack essential needs such as water, food and healthcare. Hundreds of thousands of others are living with host families. Humanitarian agencies need to urgently step up and scale up assistance to people."⁶⁹²

In May 2020 UNHCR noted on the situation in Ituri "[...] where more than 200,000 people have been forced to flee their homes in just two months," reporting that "Displaced persons have reported acts of extreme violence with at least 274 civilians killed with weapons such as machetes. More than 140 women were raped and almost 8,000 houses set on fire".⁶⁹³

MSF reported in June 2020 that "A surge in violence in the two months since April [2020] has seen nearly 200,000 people displaced from their homes in Ituri province".⁶⁹⁴

Basing its analysis on country information compiled by a range of sources as well as on a review of recent rapid needs assessments undertaken in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika, the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) reported in October 2020:

The presence of [...] armed groups and intercommunal violence further exacerbate the volatile security conditions in Ituri (NRC, Solidarités, ACTED, Reflex 05/05/2020). These waves of violence have led to the forced displacement of thousands of people from affected areas (Unknown/OCHA 23/04/2020). Host communities are under increasing stress as the numbers of IDPs continue to grow with little prospect of return in the short to medium term (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 05/08/2020). In the province's capital, Bunia, most

⁶⁹⁰ U.S. Department of State, [*2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo*](#), 30 March 2021, *Section 2 E. Status and treatment of internally displaced persons*

⁶⁹¹ OHCHR, [*DR Congo: Bachelet says new Government has "window of opportunity" after peaceful political transition*](#), 29 January 2020

⁶⁹² Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [*Displaced by community violence, living in dire conditions in Ituri province*](#), 7 February 2020

⁶⁹³ UNHCR, [*Surging violence uproots thousands of people in eastern Congo*](#), 8 May 2020

⁶⁹⁴ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [*Nearly 200,000 people forced from homes as violence surges in northeast DRC*](#), 4 June 2020

IDPs are hosted in camps within or around the city. Others stay with host families (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 05/08/2020). In other areas, IDPs rely on host families or rented accommodation. As capacity is overwhelmed, increasing numbers sleep in improvised centres such as schools and churches (Unknown/OCHA 23/04/2020).⁶⁹⁵

The World Health Organization (WHO)'s Health Cluster on the DRC published an information note on 3 May 2021, which stated about the Ituri "hub" [unofficial translation]:

ITURI

Djugu Territory:

Two assessments conducted in early April by AIDES in the Linga and Jiba Health Areas in Djugu Territory, report that more than 204,070 recent returnees in 16 Linga and Jiba Health Areas are in need in all sectors: There are needs to be covered in terms of protection, health and nutrition, food security and livelihoods, AME/shelter, WASH and education.

Validation of the statistics of 1,651,180 IDPs and 584,463 returnees in Ituri by the Population Movement Commission/CMP during the meeting held in Bunia on 25 April 2021. It remains the territory with the most displaced people (630,723). An inter-organisational mission is being prepared for the health zones of Rimba and Logo, which will largely update the statistical data for Mahagi territory. This territory is followed by Djugu territory, with 501,951 displaced persons. In Irumu territory we have 412,286 displaced persons and in Mambasa territory 49,997 displaced persons. But also, the largest number of returnees is in Mahagi territory, with 401,790 returnees, followed by Djugu territory, 262,964 returnees.⁶⁹⁶

In June 2020, Amnesty International reported on displaced people from Ituri:

[...] The 10,000 displaced people at the border of DRC and Uganda fled attacks on villages in the War-Palara and Panduru chiefdoms. The displaced, most of whom are from the Alur ethnic group, are staying in the locality of Mon-Zeu, in the chiefdom of Alur Djuganda, in Mahagi territory, in the west of Ituri province near DRC's border with Uganda's Zombo district.⁶⁹⁷

12.3.1. Access to housing

Echoing a joint statement from October 2019 from Action Against Hunger, AVSI, Danish Refugee Council, Intersos, Mercy Corps, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Solidarités International, Tearfund, Trócaire & Welthungerhilfe about living conditions of IDPs in Ituri, Oxfam wrote:

The majority of people who have been displaced are living with vulnerable host families, stretching already poor communities, with little or no resources, to breaking point. Others are living in cramped conditions in public places, such as churches and schools or barely surviving in overcrowded makeshift camps. The agencies said that in some instances, up to 500 people are having to share one toilet, while others are having to drink dirty water that infects them with potentially deadly water-borne diseases. Many are sleeping on bare floors in flimsy shelters that offer very little protection from heavy rains. The conditions also increase the risk of sexual violence for women and girls.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁵ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Education & child protection challenges in Eastern DRC Impact of COVID-19, conflict and policy reform](#), 19 October 2020, p. 3

⁶⁹⁶ World Health Organization, [Health Cluster: République Démocratique du Congo: Cluster Santé Sitrep S16 2021](#), 3 May 2021, p. 3 [unofficial translation by COI researcher]

⁶⁹⁷ Amnesty International, [East Africa: People seeking safety are trapped at borders due to COVID-19 measures](#), 22 June 2020

⁶⁹⁸ Oxfam, [Lean season in DR Congo: aid agencies fear for hundreds of thousands in desperate need](#),

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), reporting in February 2020 about IDPs camps in Ituri, wrote about an inhabitant of the Tse Lowi displacement camp:

Inside the hut, one of Yvonne's grandsons is stoking the fire crackling beneath a bubbling saucepan. The hut seems fragile, as if it could go up in flames with the slightest gust of wind fanning the fire. It's hard to imagine how eight people can sleep in this small space, which serves both as bedroom and kitchen.[...] Yvonne lives in the Tse Lowi displacement camp with her son and six grandchildren. Her tiny hut, in which she cannot even stand up, is made of straw. Whenever it rains the whole family gets wet.

Fortunately, hygiene facilities have been installed in their camp, including latrines and enclosed areas where it is possible to wash with some privacy. That is not the case in the camps that have appeared more recently with the latest waves of displaced people, such as Kambe camp, which was built seven months ago and is currently home to 426 households that share just four makeshift latrines and have nowhere to shower.⁶⁹⁹

12.3.2. Access to livelihood

Echoing a joint statement from October 2019 from Action Against Hunger, AVSI, Danish Refugee Council, Intersos, Mercy Corps, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Solidarités International, Tearfund, Trócaire & Welthungerhilfe about the living conditions of IDPs in Ituri, Oxfam wrote:

The increased violence, which has multiple complex causes, has re-ignited tensions between different communities, with devastating consequences. People are no longer able to travel to the market, for fear of being attacked. Many were about to harvest but have been forced to abandon their fields and crops. They have now lost a fourth agricultural season in a row, which, in a largely rural economy means no food or income.

The arrival of the lean season will put even more stress on what little food is available; in some places, the price of beans and other staple food has already more than doubled. Nearly half of the population in the affected area is facing crisis levels of hunger.

Corinne N'Daw, Oxfam's Country Director in DR Congo, said: "The situation is dire and many children are suffering from malnutrition. Most people have lost everything they own and have witnessed horrendous atrocities, now they face a deadly dilemma, do they go without food or risk their lives to go back to their fields".⁷⁰⁰

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), reporting in February 2020 about IDPs camps in Ituri, quoted an inhabitant of the Kambe displacement camp as stating:

"The small hut at the end of the block is our only toilet; we have no shower, so we wait until it's dark, when nobody can see us, to wash ourselves."

"Food is very scarce here. The few plots of onions, pumpkin and potatoes that we grow aren't enough to feed everyone and the nearest water source is a 45-minute walk away", explains Aimé. "The displaced people in Kambe help the locals in their fields to earn a bit of money. A typical day wage is around CDF 1,000 (or €0.50), which is barely enough to buy food, and if they get sick, their families are left with empty stomachs until they are able to go back to

17 October 2019

⁶⁹⁹ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [*Displaced by community violence, living in dire conditions in Ituri province*](#), 7 February 2020

⁷⁰⁰ Oxfam, [*Lean season in DR Congo: aid agencies fear for hundreds of thousands in desperate need*](#), 17 October 2019

work”.⁷⁰¹

UNHCR noted in May 2020 on the situation in Ituri: “[...] where more than 200,000 people have been forced to flee their homes in just two months”:

UNHCR is concerned for the safety of the displaced people and fears that the lack of humanitarian assistance will have a huge impact as income opportunities have been reduced with the COVID-19 pandemic. Hunger is also a real risk with food prices increasing due to limited supply in both territories.⁷⁰²

12.3.3. Access to healthcare

Echoing a joint statement from October 2019 from Action Against Hunger, AVSI, Danish Refugee Council, Intersos, Mercy Corps, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Solidarités International, Tearfund, Trócaire & Welthungerhilfe about the living conditions of IDPs in Ituri, Oxfam wrote:

Martine Villeneuve, Country Director for the Danish Refugee Council in DR Congo, said: “There is not enough clean water, food or shelter and facilities like toilets, health centers and clean water points are stretched to breaking point. With large numbers of people living in overcrowded conditions and drastic levels of malnutrition, the situation is a toxic cocktail that is highly conducive for a rapid spread of diseases.”

Because there are very few medicines available, preventable diseases like measles, malaria, polio and respiratory tract infections are rife. In one informal settlement Oxfam visited in Kasenyi, where lots of displaced people were living in cramped conditions next to a church, three children had died the previous day and eight more had died in a month.⁷⁰³

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported in June 2020 that after “a surge of violence in the two months since April [2020] has seen nearly 200,000 people displaced from their homes in Ituri province” and that “People’s access to healthcare is impeded not only by the violence but also by the fear of violence”.⁷⁰⁴ The same source quoted Benjamin Courlet, MSF’s field coordinator as stating:

The violence is systematically targeting villages and health centres in order to prevent the people who fled from returning, [...] Some people are too terrified to go the health centres that are still functioning in the villages or in the camps. Instead they stay in the bush, so we have set up mobile clinics to reach them there.⁷⁰⁵

12.3.4. Access to education

⁷⁰¹ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [*Displaced by community violence, living in dire conditions in Ituri province*](#), 7 February 2020

⁷⁰² UNHCR, [*Surging violence uproots thousands of people in eastern Congo*](#), 8 May 2020

⁷⁰³ Oxfam, [*Lean season in DR Congo: aid agencies fear for hundreds of thousands in desperate need*](#), 17 October 2019

⁷⁰⁴ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [*Nearly 200,000 people forced from homes as violence surges in northeast DRC*](#), 4 June 2020

⁷⁰⁵ Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), [*Nearly 200,000 people forced from homes as violence surges in northeast DRC*](#), 4 June 2020

See also section [9.2.2. Access to education](#) [under section 9.2. *Conflict-related violence directed against children*].

Echoing a joint statement from October 2019 from Action Against Hunger, AVSI, Danish Refugee Council, Intersos, Mercy Corps, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Solidarités International, Tearfund, Trócaire & Welthungerhilfe about the living conditions of IDPs in Ituri, Oxfam wrote:

Now is also the start of the school year in DR Congo, but many schools have been burnt down or are still being used as shelters for displaced people. Many thousands of young children displaced to rural villages and camps are not able and do not have the strength to go to school, giving them little prospect in both the immediate and distant future. Nicolo' Carcano from the AVSI Foundation, which has been working to provide education in Ituri for many years, said: "The education system is in a critical state. There are not enough schools and the ones that are still standing are overcrowded and in poor conditions. Facilities like clean water and toilets are lacking and child protection is becoming problematic."⁷⁰⁶

Basing its analysis on COI compiled by a range of sources as well as on a review of recent rapid needs assessments undertaken in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika, the Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) reported in October 2020:

In Ituri province, assessments noted increased child protection risks for out of school children, particularly IDPs. They highlighted the lack of assistance provided for children outside the school system and weak or non-existent protection structures for at risk children, including unaccompanied displaced minors and orphans. Without school, these children are left unsupervised, roaming the streets and sometimes engaging in harmful behaviour. In Bunia, reports noted increased risks of SGBV and child pregnancies or marriages, with displaced women and girls particularly vulnerable. Reports of displaced children engaging in sex work are also common in Bunia (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 05/08/2020). Parents forcing their children to work or beg in the streets is another concern (Multisectoral Assessment under OCHA 03/08/2020). Although data on school return rates is currently unavailable, child pregnancies, marriages and labour, all reduce the probability that children will return to schools once they reopen.⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰⁶ Oxfam, [Lean season in DR Congo: aid agencies fear for hundreds of thousands in desperate need](#), 17 October 2019

⁷⁰⁷ Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS), [Education & Child Protection Challenges in Eastern DRC: Impact of COVID-19, Conflict and Policy Reform](#), October 2020, p. 7