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KIVU SECURITY TRACKER

FOREIGN INCURSIONS AND CLASHES

MONTHLY REPORT N°30 - APRIL 2020

85 violent deaths (↑80% from March 2020)
105 abducted or kidnapped (↓46%)
61 clashes (↑25%)

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). As

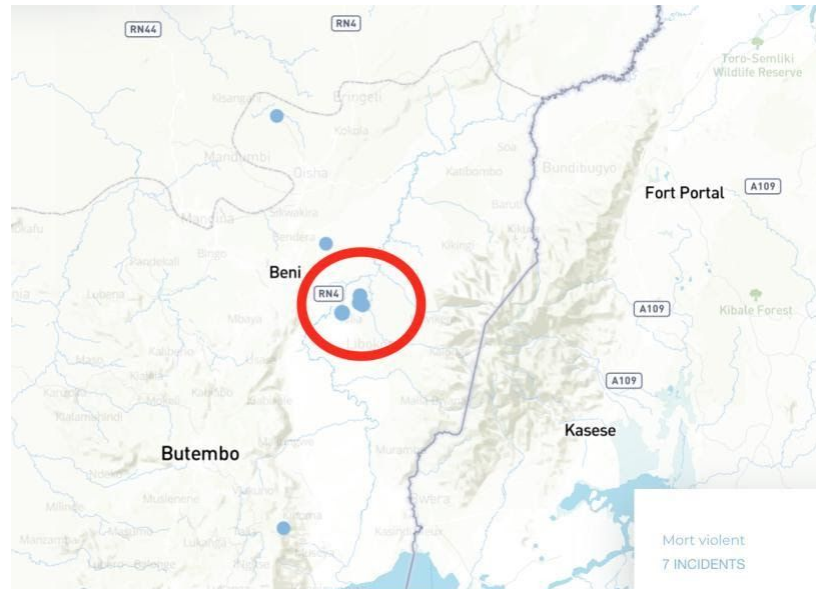
is often the case, it was Beni territory, still suffering from the presence of the Islamists of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) which paid the heaviest price (23 deaths), followed by Rutshuru territory (21) and Masisi territory (16).

The Nduma Defence of Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) is present in both of these territories, [resulting in clashes with rival movements that are particularly deadly for civilians](#). The NDC-R, which [controls the largest territory in the Kivus](#), appears to be suffering the repercussions of its vast territorial expansion. It is faced with having to deal with several frontlines stretching from Walikale to Rutshuru via Masisi and Lubero territories, which may have played a part in the setbacks it has suffered, such as [in Kamudoka in Rutshuru on April 3, where it lost 12 men in a single battle](#).

Also, the presence of two foreign armies was observed in April: the Rwandan army (RDF) in Rutshuru territory, where it took part in hunting down Rwandan Hutu rebels of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR-Foca), alongside the Congolese army possibly in coordination with the NDC-R; and the National Defense Forces (FDN), the Burundian army, in Uvira territory in South Kivu, to track down Burundian rebellions, including the Resistance for the Rule of Law in Burundi (RED-Tabara) with the support of other local groups.

There has also been a marked increase in insecurity in cities, including a rise in armed robberies in Goma and Bukavu. This could partly be the result of a deterioration in the economic situation. The new COVID-19 pandemic has caused border closures with neighboring countries (on which many workers and traders in border towns depend), high inflation, and a drop in the value of the Congolese franc.

Beni: the Martyr of Halungupa



Civilian killings in Beni territory in April

After a month of March during which the number of civilians killed in Beni territory fell, the killings returned with 23 people killed by armed actors in April. The vast majority of which – 19 out of 23 – were killed by ADF Ugandan Islamist rebels.

The town of Halungupa, (the red circle on the above map) located on the road linking Beni to Kasindi, paid a particularly heavy price, with four incidents (including three attributed to the ADF) and 20 civilians killed over the month of April alone. This is in addition to the 15 civilians already killed in Halungupa in March.

The scarce military presence and proximity of the Virunga National Park, which is often used as a refuge by armed groups, may explain the vulnerability of Halungupa. However, such persistent violence might also be linked to cocoa growing, which is particularly important in this area. Several village residents have stated that bags of cocoa went missing during the attacks. Contraband cocoa has historically been one of the ADF's main economic activities. FARDC officers have also been accused of taking part in this smuggling by UN experts on the DRC.

The territory also saw particularly deadly clashes between the ADF and the FARDC. An [ADF position was attacked at the end of the month by the FARDC at Kambi ya Yua, with 25 deaths among the armed group and six among FARDC troops](#). The FARDC were also attacked by the ADF-allied Mai-Mai Kyangenda group, on April 11 in Mangazi.

Lastly, the FARDC policy of allying itself with armed groups to fight against the ADF seems to have caused tension within these groups. The decision by chief Mai-Mai Uhuru to send his troops to be trained by the FARDC at the Kalunguta base in the hope of integrating them caused a split in his group with some of its members refusing to join the ranks of the army. On [April 22, these Uhuru dissidents attacked the Union des patriotes pour la libération du Congo \(UPLC\), another group allied with the FARDC](#).

Lubero - Walikale: Clashes Between Frenemies

There were three clashes in Lubero and Walikale territories in April between the Forces patriotiques populaires, the Armée du peuple (FPP-AP) of Kabidon, and the Union des patriotes pour la défense des innocents (UPDI) Mazembe of Kitete Bushu, causing 15 deaths among the combatants.

Kabidon, however, was a close ally of Kitete up until last October. Tensions between these two groups appear to have started after the UPDI's decision to join the Réseau des patriotes résistants congolais (RPRC), an alliance created by the NDC-R.

In all cases, it was the FPP-AP of Kabidon who attacked first on April 22 at Kateku and Kimaka. On April 3 and 4, the NDC-R joined forces with the UPDI which enabled them to fight off the attackers. This is the first concrete and visible action by the RPRC alliance on the ground.

Moreover, the Mai-Mai Maachano group arrived in the territory after having left the center of Mubambiro on April 15, where it had been stationed while pending disarmament. On April 21, the [FARDC drove the group from the village of Kifurka where it had established itself](#), forcing it to retreat to the forests of Waloa-Luanda groupement to reorganize itself. Other groups, such as the Mai-Mai Kirikicho and Kifuafua Delphin, are settled there. This concentration of armed actors in the area may lead to clashes.

Masisi: Battle for Lukweti

There was an uptick in insecurity in April with 20 incidents (compared with 11 the previous month) and 16 civilians killed (compared with eight the previous month).

The clash between the NDC-R and the People's Alliance for a Free and Sovereign Congo (APCLS) was the most active conflict in the territory. It particularly affected the village of Lukweti which recorded four APCLS incursions in April alone.

As the historical base of the APCLS, where it has networks, this village was taken by the NDC-R in 2018 during its progression in Masisi territory. Retaking it remains an APCLS objective, even though to date they have not been able to do so.

Furthermore, the Congolese National Police were also involved in a [clash](#) and the killing of three civilians.

Rutshuru: the FDLR-Foca, Victims and Perpetrators

The main incident of April was the major offensive, launched by the Congolese army on April 13, with the support of the Rwandan army, against the FDLR-Foca. This had many consequences, both direct and indirect.

First, it led to the destruction of property ([105 homes in the villages of Marangara, Kanyeru and Kazaroho on April 13](#)) and the deaths of six civilians. As a result of this, the FDLR-Foca, the target of this operation, and specifically the Maccabé unit, began moving. According to the movement's internal sources, it attempted to retaliate against FARDC Colonel Claude Rusimbi, who is suspected of maintaining relations between the FARDC and the RDF.

Indeed, he was the likely target of the FDLR-Foca ambush on April 24 near to Rumangabo. In reality, [the attacked vehicle's occupants were civilians and Virunga National Park rangers. The incident cost the lives of 17 people, including 12 rangers, making it the deadliest](#)

[incident in the history of the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature \(ICCN\) within the park](#), and led to a groundswell of emotion both within the country and beyond.

In a less visible manner, the hunt for the FDLR-Foca took place in parallel to an offensive of the [NDC-R \(close to the FARDC and the RDF\)](#) against the Nyatura of the Collectif des mouvements pour le changement (CMC, a group allied with the FDLR-Foca). The NCD-R also suffered a significant setback [on April 3 in Kamudoka where it lost 12 men](#).

Also, a new armed group seems to be emerging in the region of Nyamilima against a backdrop of resentment of some local farmers towards the Virunga National Park rangers, who block their access to fields located within in the park. This new group appears to be recruiting among former members of the [Mai-Mai Charles \(their commander, Je t'aime, surrendered in March\)](#) and among the youth of local communities.

Goma and Bukavu: Covid-19, Politics and Insecurity

There were 12 cases of armed robbery in Goma and Bukavu in April, causing the death of at least one civilian (a trader).

This is a significant increase from previous months (we only recorded four in both cities). This may be linked to the economic crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused border closures, a depreciation of the Congolese franc, and strong inflation.

Also, on April 7 in Goma, skirmishes broke out between the police and some youths who were protesting against the containment measures imposed to prevent the spread of the epidemic, causing one of the youths to be wounded.

In Bukavu, three marches organized in protest against the arrest in Kinshasa of Vital Kamerhe, the president's influential former chief of staff and originally from Bukavu, got out of hand. Twenty people were arrested.

Idjwi, Kabare and Kalehe: Chance Mihonya Weakened

The Chance Mihonya group, which has been operating within the Kahuzi-Biega National Park for several years, split and suffered from internal clashes at the end of April. According to our information, one of its lieutenants, known as "Douze," is reported to have taken control of the majority of the group's troops, believed to number approximately 100 people. This group claims to defend the interests of the Pygmy community and is accused of illegally exploiting the park's resources.

Additionally, according to an internal local administration report consulted by the KST, a coalition of Raia Mutomboki groups, including the Hamakombo, have allegedly set up a base in Katubiro. "They are using a prisoner, a Conseil national pour la renaissance et la démocratie (CNRD) general, to train their groups," the document indicates. The general in question might be Jean-Pierre Gaseni, whose presence within the Raia Mutomboki groups has been confirmed by several local sources and mentioned in [our previous monthly report](#).

Shabunda: Widespread Ransoming of Residents

Shabunda experienced 5 cases of armed looting in April, an unseen situation since the start of the year. Also, Raia Mutomboki Musumbu and Mai-Mai She Malaika groups set up a system of taxation of economic operators in the village of Nepanepa.

The surrender of chief Raia Mutomboki Ngandu [last month](#) in no way improved security in the territory. The chief was replaced by Mabala Messe, who is now leading his coalition, "Force populaire pour la paix," comprising the Donat, Ndarumanga, 100 kg, Blaise, and Charlequin. More broadly, the insecurity in Shabunda is partly due to the vacuum left by the security services. Yet where they are present, the FARDC itself is illicitly imposing taxes on travelers and trafficking, including on the roads leading from the provincial capital, Bukavu.

Fizi and Uvira: Shifting Alliances and Burundian Involvement

Insecurity rose in Fizi and Uvira territories in April, with 28 incidents recorded compared with 21 in March. There was a marked increase in clashes (18 compared with 10).

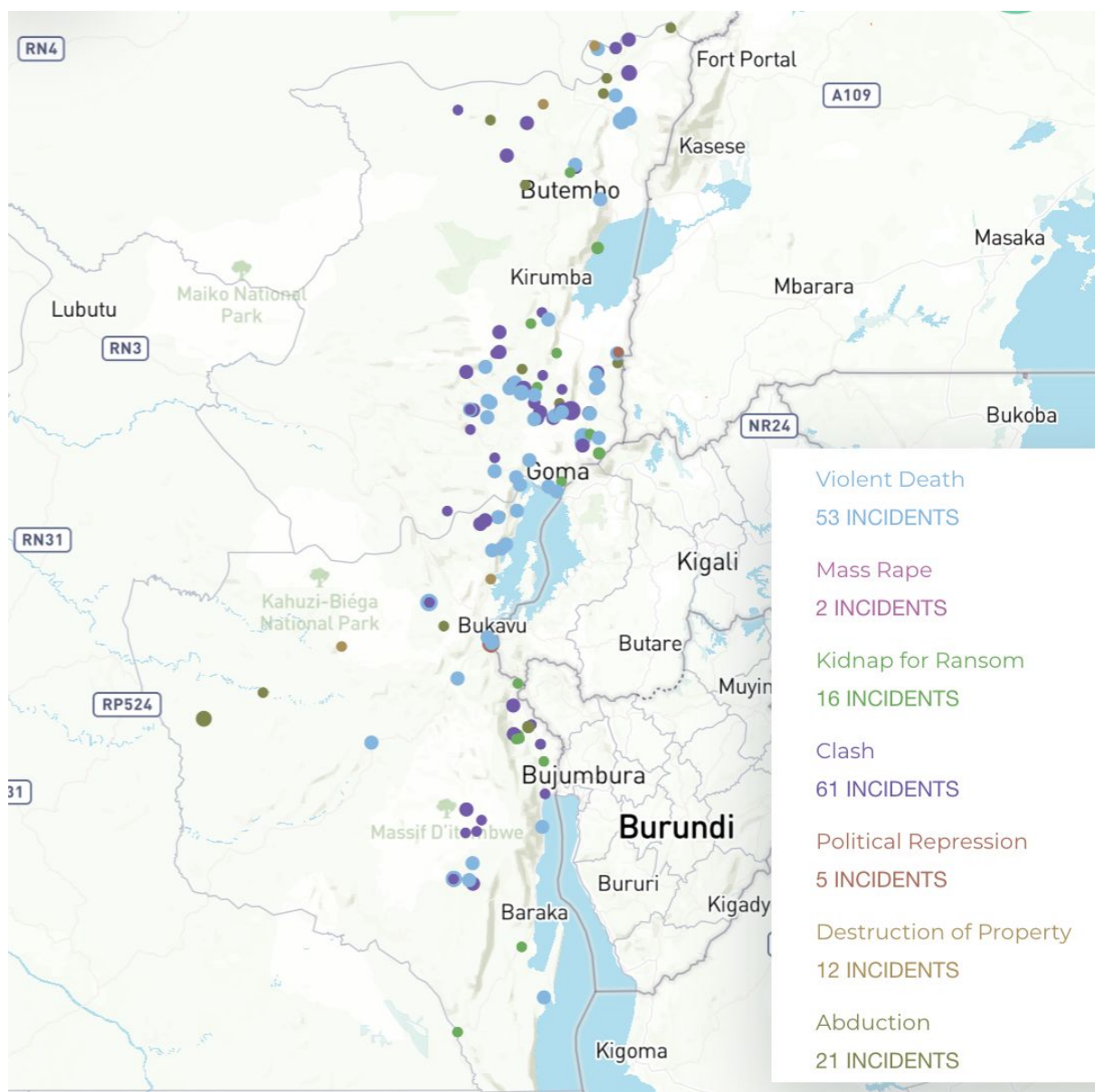
In the highlands, the cycle of violence which started in 2019, between armed groups from the Banyamulenge (Gumino and Twirwaneho) community and the Mai-Mai groups from other highland communities (mainly Banyindu, Babembe and Bafuliru) is still ongoing. The killing of three civilians from the Banyamulenge community by the Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke on April 19 in Kivumu in particular has rekindled tensions.

A spectacular reversal of alliances was, however, observed at the end of April when the [Mai-Mai Ebu Ela attacked the Burundian uprising RED-Tabara at Runywera on April 26](#). For several months, the RED-Tabara appeared to have the support of the Mai-Mai groups in their clashes with the Gumino.

However, to go and attack the RED-Tabara, the Mai-Mai Ebu-Ela crossed an area controlled by the Banyamulenge Gumino group. A pact of non-aggression seems to now exist between the Ebu Ela and the Gumino, despite their clashes in recent months.

According to many sources, including a military and intelligence service source, the Ebu Ela reversal took place after a trip to Burundi where it is reported to have gained the support of a high-ranking Burundian army officer.

Furthermore, members of the Burundian army and the Imbonerakure militias, close to power in Gitega, entered the DRC during the month of April, according to several local sources. It seems the aim was to protect against Burundian rebel groups present in South Kivu, particularly in the run up to presidential elections on May 20.



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