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EASTERN DRC SITUATION

06 February 2025



Lushagala IDP site before the fighting in eastern DRC. Following the conflict, systematic destruction and dismantling of IDP sites, particularly around Goma, have forced many to return to unsafe areas. © UNHCR/Guerchom Ndebo

HIGHLIGHTS

- As of 5 February 2025, [reports](#) indicate that the **fighting killed over 2,900 people, injured 2,880, and displaced 500,000.**
- **Protection monitoring in North Kivu resumed on 31 January**, indicating a drastic deterioration in the protection environment for civilian populations.
- The **destruction and dismantling of IDP sites, particularly around Goma, continue** forcing many IDPs to return to unsafe areas. UNHCR stresses that returns must be voluntary, safe, and dignified.
- The closure of Goma airport has severely impacted humanitarian operations, while further straining communities already struggling with **skyrocketing food prices—up to 160% higher** in some cases.
- UNHCR, in collaboration with governments and partners in neighbouring countries, continues to **update interagency contingency plans and maintain a state of readiness to support any new arrivals.** We also call for the right to seek asylum to be upheld, ensuring those fleeing violence can access protection and assistance.
- Before the latest escalation, **more than 21 million people across the country already required humanitarian aid**—one of the highest figures globally. In total, 6.7 million people were displaced in the Democratic Republic of Congo, including 4.6 million in South and North Kivu.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

- The overall situation is yet to stabilize in Goma. **Schools in the city and surrounding areas remain closed, while [food prices have skyrocketed](#).** According to Action Aid, the cost of basic goods such as flour, beans, and oil has increased by 18% to 160% since 25 January. **In South Kivu province, [renewed fighting](#) has been reported around Nyabibwe in Kalehe territory, some 70 kilometres north of the provincial capital Bukavu.**
- The human cost of the fighting that occurred in and around Goma in late January continues to rise. As of 5 February 2025, [reports](#) indicate that the fighting killed over 2,900 people, injured 2,880, and displaced 500,000, while road closures and ongoing insecurity continue to hinder humanitarian access. [MONUSCO](#) bases in Goma continue to offer shelter and protection to approximately 2,000 persons.
- **Protection monitoring by UNHCR and partners in North Kivu, which resumed on 31 January, indicates a drastic deterioration in the protection environment for civilian populations.** Reports include targeted executions, house burnings, and risks of reprisals against civilians perceived to be affiliated with armed groups. Heavy weapons, bombs, and long-range projectiles were used in densely populated areas, including IDP sites, causing significant casualties, particularly in Goma. Public infrastructure, including hospitals, sustained damage, while unexploded ordnances remain scattered in several neighbourhoods, posing ongoing risks to returning civilians.
- **The World Health Organization has warned of [potential disease outbreaks](#), including Mpox, Ebola and Cholera, as bodies are still being recovered across the city.** Over 2,000 have already been buried, while 900 remain in morgues, raising fears of an epidemic. The International Committee of the Red Cross has reportedly facilitated the burial of a significant number of unidentified bodies.
- **Electricity, water, and internet have been restored in parts of Goma and surrounding areas after nearly a week of outages.** With support from the ICRC and the National Red Cross Committee, technicians repaired the electricity network and set up a water chlorination system to provide safe drinking water and reduce the risk of waterborne diseases. **However, new cholera cases have still been reported in and around Goma.**
- **The destruction and dismantling of IDP sites, particularly around Goma, continue. An estimated 60% of IDPs from the area have reportedly returned to their places of origin,** while a smaller number remain in schools, churches or sites which remain intact. UNHCR reiterates that displaced people must have the right to choose freely whether to return to their places of origin, integrate locally, or relocate elsewhere. **Any return must be voluntary, safe, and dignified, in line with international standards.**
- The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for DRC, Bruno Lemarquis, **has [called](#) for the urgent reopening of Goma airport, emphasizing that resuming humanitarian flights is crucial for aid access and the survival of thousands.** Meanwhile, access to some areas, including Minova and parts of Kalehe territory, has improved, with road traffic between Goma and Minova gradually resuming.
- On 7 February, **UNHCR successfully voluntarily repatriated 113 Rwandan refugees who were living in DRC.** They had been staying in a transit centre in Goma, readying for departure; however, it was delayed when the conflict reached Goma at the end of January.

Regional Updates

- **The revised contingency plans for DRC's neighbouring countries are nearly completed.** In Rwanda, the planning figure has been raised from 30,000 to 50,000, while in Burundi, it has increased from 30,000 to 58,000. Uganda and Tanzania's figures remain unchanged at 50,000 and 20,000, respectively. Meanwhile, Zambia, Angola, and the Republic of the Congo are closely monitoring the situation and adjusting their preparedness measures accordingly. The total number of those newly arrived currently seeking asylum in neighbouring countries is 1,227.

Country	Number of Individuals
Burundi	506
Rwanda	275
Tanzania	38
Uganda	163
Zambia	245
Total	1,227

Rwanda

- Following a reduction in the hostilities this week, over 1,000 asylum seekers who had earlier arrived in Rwanda reportedly returned to Goma. UNHCR continues to conduct protection monitoring and is working to assist identified protection cases.
- The situation in Rubvau town, less than 10km from the Petite Barrière border crossing, and at the Petite Barrière and Grande Barrière border crossings is reportedly returning to normal, with a gradual increase in border crossings.
- Following the emergency coordination meeting led by the Government of Rwanda (MINEMA) and UNHCR on 31 January, **partners agreed to map out roles, activities, and resource allocation to enhance coordination and ensure an efficient, well-targeted response** to the evolving situation.

Uganda

- Since the recent escalation of hostilities inside the DRC, **Uganda continues to receive asylum seekers from DRC.** In Nyakabande, **UNHCR conducted 20 interviews with 48 individuals.** Most interviewees fled through Bunagana, a key border crossing between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. Many escaped on motorcycles, while others were transported on commercial trucks or on foot. All interviewees **recounted traumatic experiences, including heavy gunfire, family separations, and witnessing dead bodies,** highlighting the urgent need for psychosocial support.

Burundi

- **Burundi has been witnessing a notable increase in the number of new arrivals seeking asylum at it border with South Kivu province in recent weeks.** Between 3-6 February, 111 individuals sought asylum, with 135 individuals seeking asylum in the preceding week between 27 January and 2 February. **Arrivals have more than doubled** since the escalation of fighting in eastern DRC, further straining the overcrowded Cishemere Transit Centre.
- On 6 February, **UNHCR convened a coordination meeting** with 48 representatives from UN agencies, government counterparts, donors, embassies, and NGOs. The discussion focused on the crisis in eastern DRC, border conditions, and the introduction of joint border monitoring with

authorities. UNHCR also highlighted the urgent need to update the contingency plan, outlining its structure and the revision process through technical working groups in the coming days.

- UNHCR, the National Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (ONPRA) and the Directorate General for Repatriation, Reinsertion, and Reintegration (DGRRR) **conducted a joint border monitoring mission to Gatumba (30 January) and Rumonge (31 January)**. Observing a shift in the arrival trends, they agreed to update the existing contingency plan for an influx from the DRC while also proposing a newly identified site for a reception centre.

Tanzania

- The Government of **Tanzania and UNHCR will resume joint border monitoring at entry points** starting the week of 10 February 2025. This will help assess new arrivals, address protection needs, and enhance the humanitarian response efforts.
- The first inter-agency emergency coordination meeting on the DRC situation was held in Kigoma, bringing together the Ministry of Home Affairs, UNHCR, UN agencies, and local and international NGOs. **An emergency response task force was established to update the contingency plan and oversee key preparedness efforts, including shelter repairs and WASH facility improvements at transit centres.** Stakeholders also agreed to enhance coordination with relevant ministries and partners.

Zambia

- UNHCR has not observed a significant increase in arrivals from the DRC to Zambia. **Interviews with recent arrivals are underway to assess their places of origin and whether they fled before or after the latest escalation.** Notably, the journey from South Kivu to Mpulungu, at the southern tip of Lake Tanganyika, takes over a week by canoe.
- On 5 February 2025, **the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees and UNHCR met to discuss the DRC situation**, agreeing on key next steps. These include updating the 2024 DRC Contingency Plan, **maintaining a projected new arrival figure of 15,000**, and assessing potential entry routes through Northern, Luapula, Northwestern, and Copperbelt Provinces. Task forces will be established at national and sub-national levels to coordinate the response, with District Joint Operations Committees playing a key role.

Republic of Congo

- While not directly linked to the recent hostilities in eastern DRC, an escalation of **inter-communal violence in western DRC, specifically the Territory of Bolobo in Mai-Ndombé Province, has reportedly resulted in the cross-border movement of 3,231 individuals** to Gamboma District in the east of the Republic of Congo since 23 January. A total of 303 of these new arrivals have been pre-registered at the Bouémbo site.

Angola

- UNHCR has received unverified reports of a significant increase in cross-border movements from the DRC into Angola over the past week. The situation is being closely monitored as efforts continue to verify these reports.

Contacts

Tina Ghelli – Head of External Engagement, Regional Bureau for Southern Africa (ghelli@unhcr.org)
Edward Ogolla – Communications Officer, Regional Bureau for Southern Africa (ogolla@unhcr.org)