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OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Author)

UN experts urge immediate action to protect children against trafficking for recruitment and use in hostilities in DRC

GENEVA – UN human rights experts* today called for urgent measures to address grave violations against children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) amid escalating hostilities in North and South Kivu provinces.

“The recent surge in violence has led to indiscriminate attacks on civilian populations, massacres and conflict-related sexual violence, in violation of international human rights and humanitarian law,” the experts said.

Reports from health facilities indicate a rise in rape cases, with children accounting for 30 per cent of those treated. Humanitarian agencies have identified more than 1,100 unaccompanied and separated children in North and South Kivu, while attacks on hospitals, humanitarian facilities, and civilian infrastructure have further compounded the crisis. Schools have also been attacked, occupied by armed groups or used as shelters for displaced populations. “As offensives intensify, more than 700,000 people, 41 per cent of whom are school-aged children, have been displaced and the number of casualties, including among children, is mounting at an alarming rate. A majority of cases remain unreported, and this may only be a tip of the iceberg,” they warned.

Recruitment and use of children in armed conflict remain an urgent concern and grave violation of children’s rights in the DRC and is increasing as the conflict worsens, exposing children to devastating conditions, including injury, abduction, death and sexual violence. “We are particularly concerned by reports of children disappearing, being

abducted or trafficked and recruited for use in combat by all parties to the conflict," they said.

"Child-sensitive measures must be immediately implemented to protect children from these violations," the experts said. "These include strengthening early warning and child protection risk alert systems, developing robust age verification methods to prevent child recruitment, and authorising access for child protection agencies to visit military sites to verify that no children have been unlawfully recruited."

They further emphasised the need to demobilise recruited children and to provide full assistance for their physical and psychological recovery and safe reintegration.

"We call on all parties to the conflict, including those directly engaged in hostilities and persons in command roles in armed groups, to halt these atrocities and to uphold their legal obligations to protect civilians, particularly children," the experts said.

The experts are in contact with the DRC authorities about these issues.

* **The experts:** [Siobhán Mullally, Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children](#); [Mama Fatima Singhateh, Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children](#); [Tomoya Obokata, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences](#).

ecoi.net description:

Nord-Kivu and Sud-Kivu provinces: Article on the impact of armed conflict on children (rape and sexual violence; separation from the family; disruption of school attendance; recruitment of child soldiers)

Country:

Congo, Democratic Republic

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[OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (Author)

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