

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	1094
Land:	Den Demokratiske Republik Congo
Kilde:	Inter Press Service (IPS)
Titel:	Escalating Violence and Influx of Returnees in DRC Fuel Regional Instability
Udgivet:	27. marts 2026
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	12- august 2026

Escalating Violence and Influx of Returnees in DRC Fuel Regional Instability



Vivian van de Perre, Deputy Special Representative for Protection and Operations in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and Interim Head of MONUSCO, addresses the Security Council meeting on the situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Credit: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 27 2026 (IPS) - In the month following the reopening of the Burundi-Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) border, the humanitarian crisis in the DRC has deteriorated considerably, recently marked by an influx of Congolese refugees returning home, where they face overcrowded conditions and a severe shortage of essential services. This comes in the midst of escalating clashes between rebel groups AFC and M23, and forces affiliated with the Kinshasa government, with drone strikes causing widespread destruction and pushing violence closer to Burundi's borders, where conditions are most dire.

Vivian van de Perre, Deputy Special Representative for Protection and Operations with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), described the current humanitarian situation as "extremely volatile". During a press stakeout on March 26, she [highlighted](#) that the rapid spread of the conflict from

North and South Kivu into Tshopo Province and toward Burundi's borders is a major concern, warning that it increases the risk of a broader "regional conflagration."

Van de Perre also warned that armed militants have been increasingly relying on the use of heavy weapons and drone strikes in densely populated urban areas, which have caused great damage to civilian infrastructure as well as serious risks to civilian safety, underscoring recent violent incidents at the Kisangani Bangoka International Airport and in Goma, the largest city in North Kivu. Additionally, she warned of M23's growing presence in Goma, where the coalition has managed to gain influence, undermine state authority, and disrupt humanitarian aid deliveries.

Furthermore, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC (UNJHRO) has uncovered a considerable rise in human rights violations committed by armed groups. Since December 2025, approximately 173 cases of conflict-related sexual violence have been documented, affecting at least 111 victims, the majority of whom were women and girls.

Van de Perre described these findings as "only the tip of the iceberg," and highlighted growing rates of exploitation, particularly along artisanal mining sites, where child labour is especially pronounced. Armed groups have also been alleged to hamper monitoring, investigation, and justice mechanisms, and subject human rights defenders, journalists, and civil society actors to intimidation and arbitrary detention.

This follows a sharp escalation of hostilities between the armed groups in December 2025, which forced hundreds of thousands of Congolese to flee to Burundi, most coming from Uvira in South Kivu Province and the surrounding areas. Figures from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights ([UNHCR](#)) show that after M23's withdrawal from Uvira in January and a relative return of stability, more than 33,000 refugees began returning home since the border's reopening on February 23, with most crossing through the Kavimira border point. Many of these returnees already received little humanitarian assistance in Burundi due to chronic underfunding.

"Conditions in many areas of return in the DRC remain fragile, with acute humanitarian needs," said Ali Mahamat, UNHCR Head of Sub-Office in Goma, DRC, on March 24 at a press briefing at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. "Initial UNHCR assessments in Uvira and Fizi show families arriving with few belongings, in urgent need of shelter, basic household items, health care, and access to water and sanitation. Many returned to find their homes destroyed and belongings looted, leaving them in deep despair and unable to resume normal life without substantial support."

According to the latest updates from the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies ([IFRC](#)), roughly 60 percent of returnees are living in damaged shelters and over 30 percent face challenges accessing their land. Returnees face heightened risks of gender-based violence, forced recruitment into armed groups, extortion, and exploitation, with female-headed households disproportionately affected due to limited livelihood opportunities for women, which leave these communities entrenched in poverty and especially vulnerable.

Figures from UNHCR show that approximately 30 percent of returnees had been taking refuge in Burundi's Busama displacement camp, where they faced significant levels of overcrowding and limited access to clean water, sanitation services, healthcare, and

shelter. Currently, roughly 4,500 Congolese refugees remain stuck at transit points as they await being relocated to Busuma. Additionally, Burundi continues to host over 109,000 Congolese refugees, with 67,000 of them in Busuma alone.

Additionally, internal displacement remains widespread in the DRC, with more than 6.4 million people currently displaced. IFRC estimates that over 5.2 million internally displaced Congolese are concentrated in North and South Kivu, as well as Ituri, 96 percent as a result of ongoing armed violence. According to van de Perre, over 26.6 million people, roughly a quarter of DRC's population, are projected to face food insecurity this year.

Currently, UNHCR's response plan to assist returnees, refugees, and displaced Congolese civilians is only 34 percent funded, seeking a total of USD 145 million. MONUSCO is currently on the frontlines providing protection services for nearly 3,000 civilians in Djaiba village. Through the mission, the UN has been able to support over 18,000 farmers in harvesting and transporting crops and has conducted 204 patrols. Van de Perre stressed that stronger governance and security enforcement are crucial in protecting vulnerable civilians, and disarmament and repatriation efforts must be conducted to resolve broader regional tensions.

IPS UN Bureau Report

