

**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

<b>Bilagsnr.:</b>	<b>648</b>
Land:	Den Demokratiske Republik Congo
Kilde:	Kivu Security Tracker
Titel:	Monthly Report, July 2020
Udgivet:	juli 2020
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	11. december 2020



# KIVU SECURITY TRACKER

## SPLIT IN THE LARGEST REBEL TERRITORY IN THE KIVUS

*MONTHLY REPORT N°33 - JULY 2020*

129 violent deaths (↑19% from June 2020)  
99 people abducted or kidnapped (↓16%)  
63 clashes (↑3%)

The month of July 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-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.

The territory of Uvira also recorded its worst death toll since KST started collecting such data (19 civilians killed), in large part due to the insecurity in the Ruzizi Plain and a massacre committed by a FARDC soldier.

Despite this, Beni territory remained the most affected by killings with 33 deaths, still mostly due to the Islamists of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).

Overall, KST recorded the deaths of 129 civilians in July. This is a noticeable increase compared to June (108).

### Beni: Less Dead, Same Amount of Massacres

The ADF remain the territory's most violent armed group: KST recorded the death of 29 civilians in attacks attributed to this group in July.

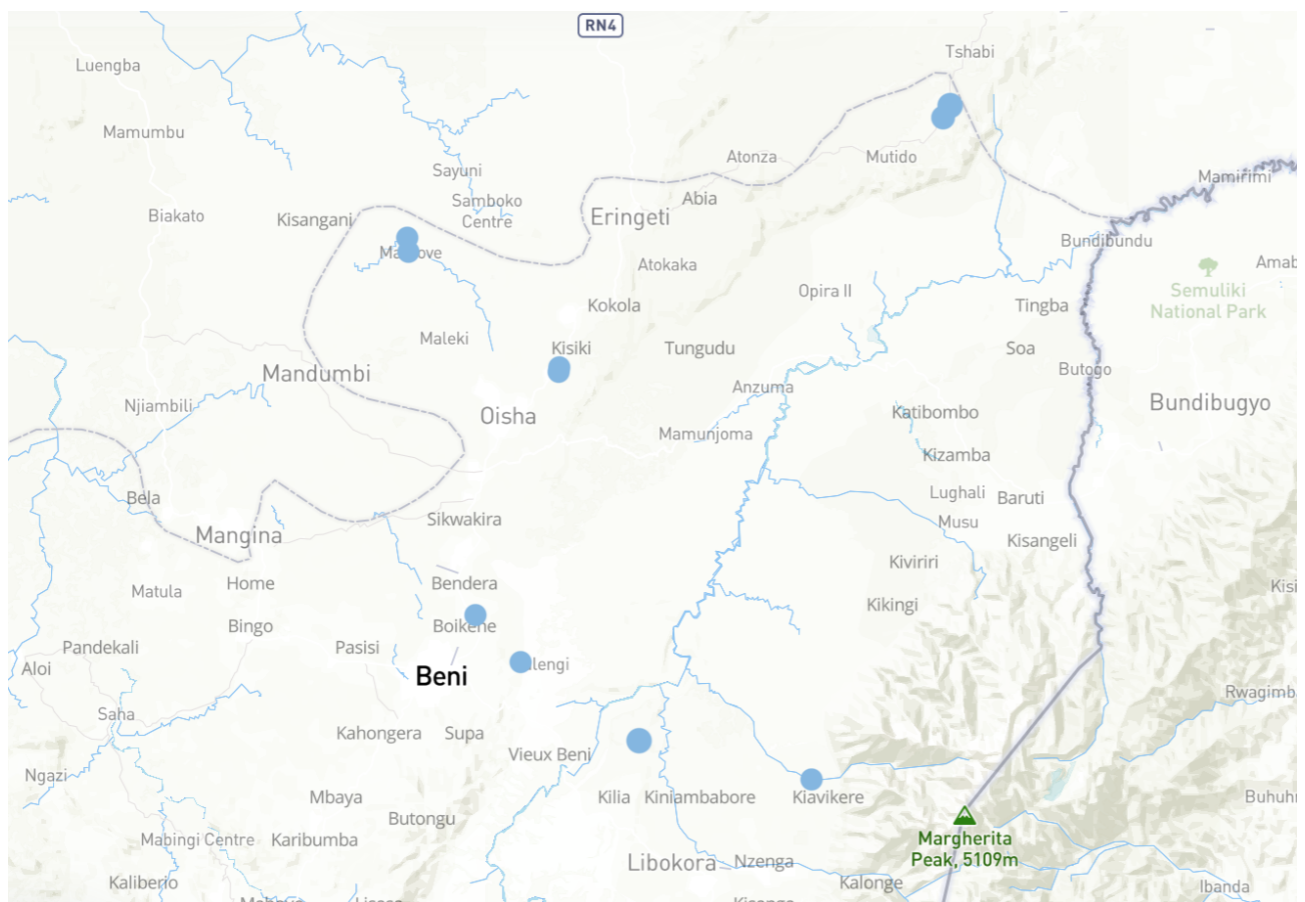
This is slightly less than the death toll for the month of June (44 civilians killed). However, this decrease does not necessarily mean that this group is weakened or less determined to carry out

massacres. The number of killings committed by this group slightly increased from 9 to 10 between June and July.

Additionally, there was a change in the leadership of the FARDC operation, responsible for putting an end to this group (Sukola 1) on July 24 (in French). Its commander, Jacques Ichaligonza, was appointed to the Second Defense Zone (Kasai and Katanga) and replaced by his deputy, Peter Cirimwami.

This reorganization has not had any immediate effects. The ADF's areas of influence have not significantly changed—massacres are still being committed mostly along the Beni-Kasindi trunk road and the border between North Kivu and the neighboring Ituri province. Notably, there is an exception in the Eringeti region where the 32<sup>nd</sup> FARDC Brigade is stationed. It is one of the few units whose actual troop numbers closely tally with its theoretical numbers (to understand the FARDC's chronic lack of troops, please see our blog post: "[Who's Stealing the FARDC's Money?](#)"). Also, according to local media sources, the ADF has committed other massacres in Ituri province (in french) an area not covered by KST.

This would mean that the ADF has bases both in North Kivu and in Ituri province.



*Location of the civilian deaths attributed to the ADF in July 2020*

The ADF, a Ugandan Islamist armed group, has been present in the region since at least 1995. Since April 2019, the Islamic State (IS) started to lay claims to some attacks. It is unclear however whether IS effectively controls the ADF, an organization with roots in local civil society for at least the past 20 years, in conjunction with other Congolese armed groups.

Nevertheless, a major FARDC offensive was launched against the ADF in October 2019 at the request of President Félix Tshisekedi. The offensive failed to bring the group under control.

According to KST data, the ADF retaliated by carrying out a series of massacres that caused the death of more than 300 civilian victims in North Kivu between November 2019 and January 2020.

#### Lubero: The End of Kitete Bushu

There was a marked intensification of violence between armed groups in July in Lubero territory, with 11 clashes recorded by KST. This is unprecedented since February 2018.

The main conflict was between two figures, Kasereka Kasyano aka “Kabido” of the Popular Patriotic Forces/People’s Army (FPP/AP) and Kitete Bushu of the Union of Patriots for the Defense of the Innocents (UPDI). Formerly allied with the Mai-Mai Mazembe, the two men fell out in October 2019, following the alliance between Kitete and the NDC-R. Kabido suspects the NDC-R of collaborating with the Kigali government (for more information on the nature of this support, please see the recent Congo Research Group report on the NDC-R).

The rivalry between both men seems to have grown in June following a personal dispute. According to a source from within the National Intelligence Agency, which is corroborated by a civil society source, Kitete is reported to have dug up the body of the father of Kabido to use as a fetish.

The balance of power between both men has swung in favor of Kabido following two events. First, according to several civil society sources, Kabido received fighters from the Union des patriotes pour la libération du Congo (UPLC) as reinforcements. This group officially surrendered in October 2019 and was quartered in camps at Kalunguta and Mateba, but was not given adequate support and, according to civil society sources, was armed.

Second, the split within the NDC-R on July 8 (see below) led many of its combatants to return to the movement’s headquarters in Walikale territory.

The concurrence of both events greatly weakened Kitete’s position against Kabido. On July 13, Kabido managed to retake the villages of Kataro, Luhanga, and Bwambali which are all very close to Kitete’s headquarters in Miriki. Following another clash on July 16, Kitete was killed in his stronghold.

In the days that followed, most of Kitete’s fighters surrendered to MONUSCO before being quartered in camps at Luofu and Kanyabayonga.

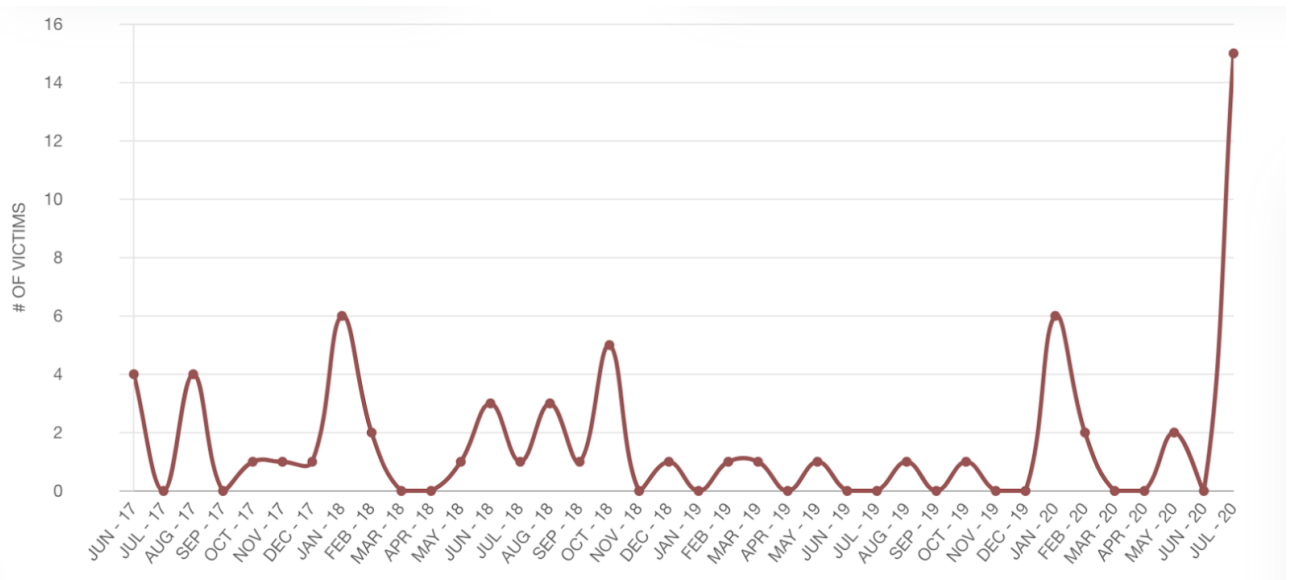
#### Walikale: Deadly Split within the NDC-R

On July 8, dissent was announced within the NDC-R, the armed group that controlled the largest territory in the Kivus (see the CRG report for more information).

In a press release, the organization’s second-in-command, Gilbert Bwira, his deputy, Mapenzi Likuhe, its spokesperson, Désiré Ngabo, as well as other senior officers, announced that they were removing their head, Guidon Shimiray. A few hours later, on the morning of July 9, these NDC-R dissidents, with the support of members of the FARDC, drove Guidon out of his Pinga headquarters.

Several clashes ensued between the two factions. But according to sources close to Guidon, as well as two local civil society members, on July 20 Guidon managed to retake the town of Pinga. Bwira then took refuge in a FARDC base,. Nevertheless, Guidon was forced to withdraw from Pinga the next day after pressure from the FARDC and the territory’s dignitaries.

These clashes and subsequent retaliation caused an upsurge in the number of civilians killed: 15 people were killed in July in Walikale territory according to KST data. Such a death toll has never occurred in this territory since the start of the project in June 2017. Men belonging to Guidon’s faction killed eight civilians and wounded another four on July 10 in Ihula, a village known to shelter members of Bwira’s family.



*Number of civilian victims of armed groups recorded by KST in Walikale territory (by month since June 2017)*

The dissidents justified their attempt to seize power within the movement by Guidon’s “deviationist behavior towards the movement” and “serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations which gave rise to United Nations Security Council sanctions on January 1, 2018 and an arrest warrant issued by the operational military court of North Kivu in 2019.”

According to KST’s sources, the dissidents accuse Guidon of not sharing the movement’s financial resources equitably. Moreover, in their view, the prospect of integrating into the FARDC has become unlikely due to sanctions and prosecutions. This attempt at removal may have been incited by a part of the FARDC. “Colonel” Mapenzi Likuhe, who is reported to have purchased arms and ammunition from FARDC officers in the past, has joined the dissident faction.

After having been forced to withdraw to Pinga, Guidon retreated to the Ihana groupement, in the west, where he has launched new recruitment initiatives in villages mostly populated by members of his community (Nyanga), including Twamakuru, Banamukiti, Irameso, and Bibasirwa. He is targeting former NDC Sheka militia who had been demobilized.

#### Masisi: The Nyatura Delta Leaderless but not Neutralized

Both factions of the NDC-R also clashed in Masisi territory, particularly in Bakucha on July 18. However, this had no immediate effect on the nature of the ongoing conflicts. The Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo (APCLS), the main rivals to the NDC-R in the territory, continued to attack the positions of both factions indifferently. The number of clashes increased in July compared to June, rising from 13 to 15.

Additionally, the FARDC decapitated the leadership of the Nyatura Delta during an ambush on July 27. The head of this group, “General” Manga, as well as three of his men, were killed.

This group was created in 2012 by Delta Gashamari, a former member of the Coalition of Congolese Patriotic Resistance (PARECO). According to the FARDC, Delta surrendered in December 2019 along with 56 of his men. But Manga fled and kept the group. According to civil society sources, after the death of Manga, a certain Kitunga was proclaimed head of the group.

### Rutshuru: The Return of the Former M23 fighters?

The split within the NDC-R also had consequences in Rutshuru territory, where it occupied positions, especially in Bwito chefferie (located in the west of the territory). Many of these were retaken by Nyatura groups and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR-Foca).

In Bwisha chefferie (bordering Rwanda and Uganda), the security situation was impacted by an attack on a FARDC position in Bikenke on July 21. According to several administrative, military, and local civil society sources, this attack was perpetrated by former members of the March 23 Movement (M23). M23 is an uprising comprised mostly of Congolese Tutsis which was supported by Rwanda between 2012 and 2013. These combatants were also identified as being behind another attack against the FARDC in Bukima on July 31. In both cases, the objective appears to have been to procure arms.

However, these fighters seem closely linked to an emerging group called the Turarambiwe ("we are tired" in Kinyarwanda), which makes it even more difficult to tell them apart.

The Turarambiwe, or Nyatura Mamba Baziyaka (the name refers to their leader), mostly comprises of former members of the Nyatura Niyonzima group which had decided to move to Goma in September 2019. In the absence of adequate support, they returned to the Rugari region in January 2020. They regrouped last May and renamed themselves the Turarambiwe after growing fear of retaliation by the Niyonzima. Most of these former fighters come from the Rera clan of the Hutu community.

This Turarambiwe-ex-M23 alliance is reported to have the aim of attacking other Nyatura movements (FDP and Domi) as well as the FDLR.

### Shabunda: Yakutumba Extends His Influence

At the start of July, some twenty members of the Raia Mutomboki of the Makindu group returned to Shabunda territory after having been trained for four months by the men of Yakutumba in Fizi territory. They call themselves "paracommandos." They were not implicated in the incidents logged by KST in July.

### Uvira: Killing by a FARDC Soldier in Sange

There was an upsurge in insecurity in Uvira territory. The death of 19 civilians by armed actors was recorded in July compared to four the previous month. Most of the incidents took place in the Ruzizi Plain. The locality of Mutarule recorded three incidents, all related to the presence of the Mai-Mai Mwenyemali allied with residual members of the National Council for Renewal and Democracy (CNRD). The CNRD is a Rwandan uprising which had largely been dismantled during joint FARDC and Rwandan army operations last December and January.

13 of the 19 civilians killed this month were killed during one incident: a killing carried out by a FARDC soldier in Sange. This incident triggered a riot in the town the following day. The killer fled. His motives remain unknown to this day.

### Fizi, Mwenga: Massacres, Disinformation and Tensions

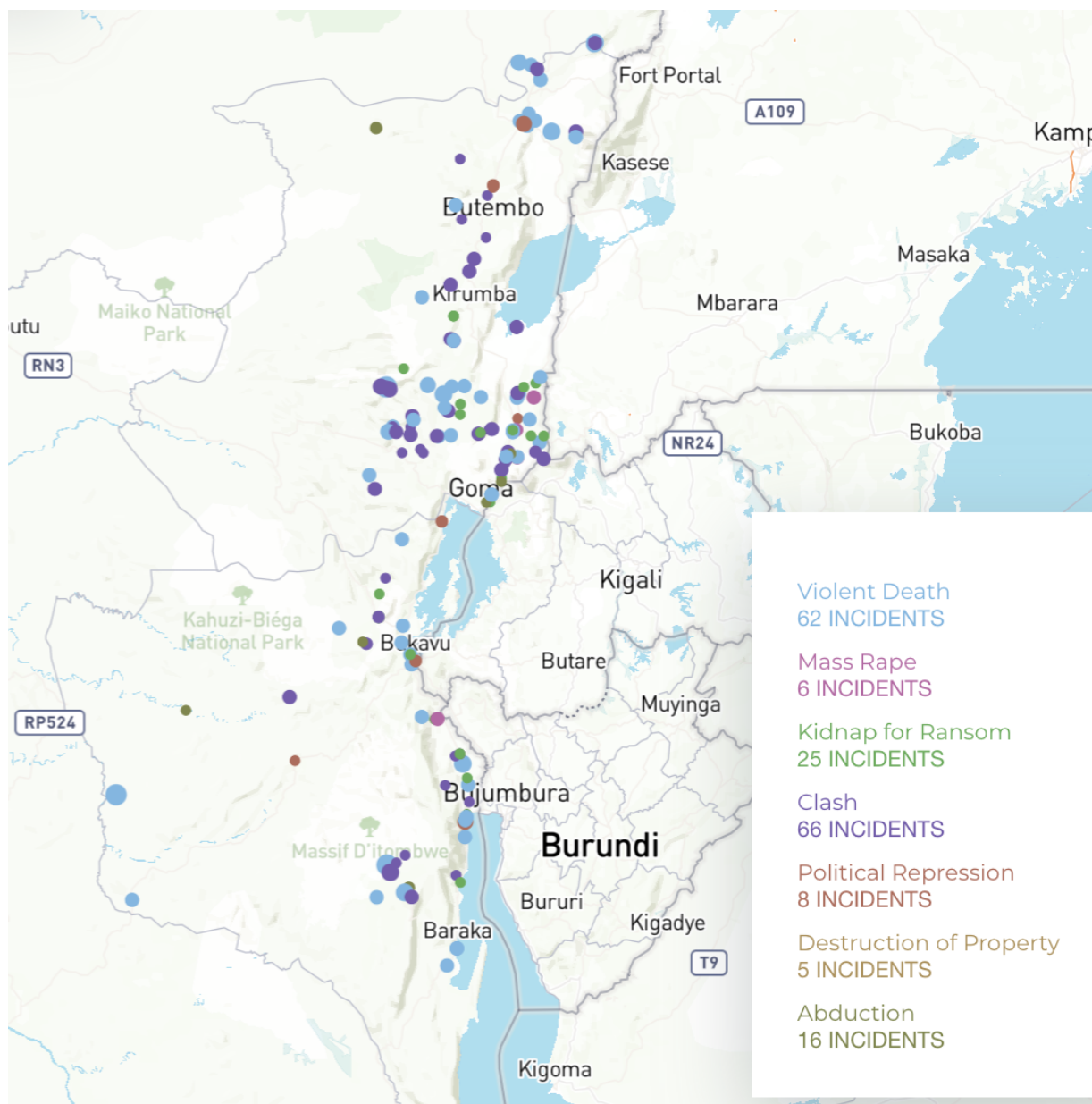
In the highlands of South Kivu, the month of July was marked by the murder of 15 civilians (including five women and a child) and the burning of 120 houses in the villages of Kipupu, Alinga, Kongwe and Kiseke on July 16. Twirwaneho militia ("let's defend ourselves" in Kinyamulenge) stated that these villages were attacked in order to dislodge Mai-Mai militia who had previously attacked camps for internally displaced Banyamulenge.

Some 30 provincial members of parliament of South Kivu published a statement indicating that the massacre's death toll was 220. This version was refuted by multiple sources when asked by KST and MONUSCO. According to local authorities, most of the 220 deaths claimed by the provincial members of parliament were in fact "missing."

The killing of Kipupu, as well as the information that had been circulated at that time, contributed to an increased polarization of the conflict in the highlands between the Twirwaneho and Gumino armed groups, both of which come from the Banyamulenge community, on one side, and the other armed actors present in the region, namely the FARDC and the Mai-Mai groups from the other communities.

Additionally, several representatives of the Mai-Mai groups, including Mtetezi and the military head of the RED-Tabara Burundian uprising, General Gisiga, met from July 14-16 in Kangule, according to several local sources and a participant. According to the participant, Gisiga claimed that Rwandan rebels of the Rwanda National Congress (RNC) who had come from Zambia have arrived in the highlands. A port source confirmed the arrival via Lake Tanganyika of some 30 individuals from Zambia who had landed close to Kazimia (in Fizi territory), though it was nearly impossible to confirm their RNC membership.

The conflict between armed groups in the highlands of South Kivu has been ongoing for more than a decade. It significantly worsened in 2019 and continues to do so since, leading to many abuses against civilians and forcing them to take shelter in internally displaced persons' camps.



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*The Kivu Security Tracker (KST) is a joint project of the Congo Research Group, based at New York University's Center on International Cooperation, and Human Rights Watch. Human Rights Watch provides training and other support to KST researchers but does not independently verify all incidents reported on the KST and does not necessarily support all the views expressed by the KST.*