

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	971
Land:	Den Demokratiske Republik Congo
Kilde:	Global Protection Cluster
Titel:	Protection Alert: Intensifying Crisis in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo
Udgivet:	27. januar 2025
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	1. april 2025



Protection Alert: Intensifying Crisis in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo

27 January 2025

The Global Protection Cluster (GPC) is issuing this Protection Alert in light of the escalating crisis and immediate protection risks to civilians in North Kivu, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Based on distressing reports from protection partners and the DRC Protection Cluster, this Alert seeks to draw attention to the worsening humanitarian situation and mobilize urgent action to protect civilians in the affected areas.

Since the renewed M23 offensives near Goma on 23 January 2025, the conflict in eastern DRC has reached alarming levels of violence and forced displacement. Over the past week, the M23 armed group has seized critical areas and cities in South and North Kivu, including Minova, Sake, Masisi and the fighting is now within the city of Goma, the regional capital.

The intensification of fighting around Goma has had devastating impact on civilians displacing over 400,000 people since the beginning of the year and adding to the 6.7 million people already displaced in the DRC¹. Indiscriminate bombardments of densely populated areas including displacement camps since 20 January have resulted in civilian casualties, including children, caused panic and triggered further mass displacements. Several displacement sites have reportedly been emptied within hours². Reports also indicate that the M23 movement has systematically ordered the dismantling of sites in the areas now under its control, forcing internally displaced persons to return to their areas of origin while the safety conditions are not fulfilled.

Humanitarian access to displacement sites, to displaced people in host families and to areas under the control of M23 remains extremely limited. Hospitals in the region are nearing capacity due to the influx of injured civilians. Protection partners have reported widespread violations, including looting, physical injuries, sexual violence, kidnappings and the arbitrary arrest of displaced individuals mistakenly identified as rebels or as associated to them.

In line with urgent appeals from the Humanitarian Coordinator in the DRC, the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator and the UN Secretary General, we call all parties to the conflict to:

- Immediately halt the military escalation and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.
- Cease targeting civilians and essential civilian infrastructure, including displacement sites and other areas sheltering displaced communities.

¹ [UNHCR gravely concerned by worsening violence and humanitarian crisis in eastern DR Congo](#)

² According to CCCM cluster, among the 18 sites under CCCM mechanisms, 8 sites are 80% emptied or more while the rest are 50% emptied. These data from the 27.01.2025 evolve every hour.

- Facilitate rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to affected populations and guarantee the safe passage of civilians fleeing active combat zones.
- Refrain from forcing displaced people to return without their informed consent and make sure the principle of voluntary return in security and dignity is upheld in accordance with the pertinent provisions of international human rights law.

The protection of civilians must be prioritized, and efforts should be directed towards achieving a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

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