

**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

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## OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

### 1,300 civilians killed in the DRC in past eight months – Bachelet

[French](#) | [Español](#)

GENEVA (5 June 2020) – Around 1,300 civilians have been killed in a number of separate conflicts involving armed groups and government forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the past eight months, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said on Friday, adding that some of the incidents involving killings and other abuses and violations may amount to crimes against humanity or war crimes.

The number of victims has soared in recent weeks as separate conflicts in three eastern provinces – Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu – have spread with disastrous repercussions for the civilian population. Armed groups have committed massacres and other atrocities, and defence and security forces have also been responsible for grave human rights violations in these provinces as well as in other parts of the country.

“I am appalled by the increase in brutal attacks on innocent civilians by armed groups, and by the reaction of the military and security forces who have also committed grave violations, including killings and sexual violence. These are not only reprehensible and criminal acts, but they also break the trust between people and the state representatives, both security and political,” Bachelet said.

In **Ituri province**, the violence has spread into new areas as armed groups have multiplied. The principal armed group continues to be CODECO, comprised mainly of fighters from the Lendu community, which has splintered after its main leader, Ngudjolo Duduko Justin, was killed on 25 March.

As documented in a [UN human rights report](#) published on 10 January 2020 and updated on 27 May, CODECO and other Lendu fighters have pursued a strategy of slaughtering local residents – mainly the Hema, but also the Alur – since 2017, in order to control the natural resources in the region. Other groups, including the Ndo Okebo, Nyali and the Mambisa, have been caught up in the violence more recently.

“So far, to their credit, the targeted communities have refrained from retaliating,” said Bachelet, who visited Ituri in January and met with people maimed and displaced during brutal attacks by CODECO. “However, in the absence of effective protection by State security forces, there is a serious risk that these communities will feel compelled to form self-defence groups, which would most likely exacerbate an already dire situation.”

The attacks and the nature of the violence committed by the armed groups have grown increasingly more gruesome, including sexual violence, beheadings and mutilation of corpses. According to the *UN Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC* (UNJHRO), between 1 October 2019 and 31 May 2020, at least 531 civilians have been killed by armed groups in Ituri, 375 of them since March, when the violence soared. Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) and police (PNC) also allegedly killed 17 civilians during the same period.

In **North Kivu**, the launch of military operations by the government forces in November 2019 led to retaliatory attacks against civilians by the main armed group, the ADF, which by 31 May had killed at least 514 civilians using machetes, axes and heavy weapons, and have been abducting children and attacking schools and hospitals. (ADF fighters were also responsible for 77 of the civilian deaths in neighbouring Ituri). State defence forces have also been heavily implicated, with the FARDC reported to have killed 59 civilians and the PNC to have killed 24. More than 400,000 people have been displaced in North Kivu.

The FARDC operations have also resulted in the ADF moving into territories previously unaffected by armed conflict. As in Ituri, there is a serious risk that Mayi-Mayi self-defence groups will spring up, with civilians once again caught in the middle.

“I call on the Congolese authorities to do the utmost to establish the State’s authority in both these conflict areas, including by introducing or expanding the presence of security forces, and to ensure such forces protect civilians rather than prey on them,” the High Commissioner said. “Protection of civilians is the responsibility of the state, and when the state leaves a vacuum, others tend to fill it. In DRC, past experience shows this can have catastrophic results. The generalised and systematic nature of some of the attacks on civilians in both Ituri and North Kivu may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes,” she added.

**In South Kivu**, at least 74 people have been killed since October and at least 36 women and children raped in a resurgence of ethnic-based violence between the Banyamulenge and the Bafuliro, Babembe, and Banyindu communities. More than 110,000 people, most of them women and children, have been displaced by the violence, which is being fuelled by hate speech disseminated through the media, social media and in public discourse. FARDC soldiers have also been responsible for human rights violations, including the killing of at least 15 people and sexual violence against 13 women.

Serious violence and killings have also been taking place in **Kongo Central** and **Kinshasa** where, between 30 March and 24 April, at least 62 civilians were killed and 74 injured during seven operations conducted by the PNC and the FARDC against militants of the politico-religious group Bundu Dia Kongo (BDK).

BDK followers held banned demonstrations, blocked roads, used hate speech, threatened to expel foreigners from Kongo Central, and reportedly physically attacked some of them. They also reacted violently against the security forces, killing one police officer and wounding nine others. However, the response of the security forces was clearly disproportionate, with police officers systematically using live ammunition to disperse unarmed crowds. On 22 April, in Songololo, Kongo Central, law enforcement agents raided a house where 70 BDK followers had gathered, set it on fire and shot at or used machetes against those fleeing the blaze, killing 19 people, including a child. Two days later in Kinshasa, police and armed forces killed a further 31 BDK followers in an operation to detain the group’s leader, Ne Muanda Nsemi.

“International human rights norms and standards on the use of force by security forces\* establish a clear balance between the threat and the response,” said the High Commissioner. “Even during a State of Emergency, the use of force should always be exceptional and based on the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality.” Security forces should only use force when strictly necessary, and lethal force can only be used when there is an imminent risk to life.”

Urging the authorities “to take all necessary measures to prevent the repetition of such grave violations,” the High Commissioner stressed that the investigations that have been established must be credible, transparent and independent, and that the victims and their families have the right to justice, truth and reparations.

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For the video, please click [here](#)

#### ecoi.net summary:



According to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, more than 1,300 civilians killed in armed conflict between 1 October 2019 and 31 May 2020

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Congo, Democratic Republic

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**Austrian Red Cross**  
Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and  
Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien  
[T \(Telephone\)](tel:+43158900583) +43 1 589 00 583  
[F \(Fax\)](tel:+43158900589) +43 1 589 00 589  
[info@ecoi.net](mailto:info@ecoi.net)

Contact  
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