

Atrocity Alert No. 463: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Venezuela and Myanmar (Burma)

Atrocity Alert is a weekly publication by the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect highlighting situations where populations are at risk of, or are enduring, mass atrocity crimes.

VIOLENCE ESCALATES IN SOUTH KIVU, DR CONGO, DESPITE PEACE AGREEMENT

On 10 December the Rwandan-backed March 23 Movement (M23) seized Uvira in the [Democratic Republic of the Congo's \(DRC\)](#) South Kivu province. The arrival in Uvira followed a week of intense fighting across South Kivu, during which the DRC military (FARDC) and Burundian forces, alongside the Wazalendo militia coalition, were pushed out as M23 captured towns along the road to the city, including Luvungi, Mutarule and Sange. According to the UN, the use of artillery shelling, attack drones and other explosive weapons resulted in at least 74 civilian deaths and 83 injuries. The UN estimates that more than 500,000 people, including 104,000 children, have been newly displaced within South Kivu since 1 December.

After taking control of Uvira, M23 fighters continued to commit abuses, including executing individuals suspected of supporting the Wazalendo. Human Rights Watch reports that Wazalendo fighters have also harassed, threatened, abducted and restricted access to basic services for members of the Banyamulenge community – South Kivu-based Congolese Tutsis – accusing them of backing M23.

Throughout 2025, as [insecurity](#) in North and South Kivu has worsened, all parties to the conflict have [perpetrated atrocities](#). After seizing [Goma](#) and Bukavu, the provincial capitals of North and South Kivu, M23 fighters likely committed the crimes against humanity of torture, [sexual violence](#) and enforced disappearance. The FARDC and [Wazalendo](#) committed deliberate killings of civilians, widespread sexual violence, looting and forced recruitment and use of children. Uvira was the Congolese government's last major foothold in South Kivu. Although an M23 leader stated on 16 December that the group would withdraw from Uvira as a gesture of trust-building following international pressure, he did not specify a timeline.

The latest offensive coincided with the presidents of the DRC and Rwanda signing a United States-mediated peace agreement (the Washington Accords) on 4 December, reaffirming a deal signed in [June](#) aimed at stabilizing the country and facilitating Western investment in mining. M23 was not a signatory and continues to participate in a parallel peace process led by Qatar.

UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, warned that the “recent developments in South Kivu undeniably illustrate the gap that exists between diplomatic efforts and the reality experienced by civilian populations affected by the ongoing hostilities.” As the UN

Security Council (UNSC) prepares to vote on renewing the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC's (MONUSCO) mandate on 19 December, the escalating clashes in South Kivu have prompted discussions on the Mission's possible return to the province.

The UNSC must ensure MONUSCO has the capacity, resources and flexible funding needed to protect civilians and respond to escalating risks. Governments should press regional actors to facilitate access for the UN Commission of Inquiry on DRC to enable evidence collection and documentation. Guarantors of the Washington Accords must take concrete action to enforce compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law.

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY CONTINUE IN VENEZUELA AMID SHRINKING GLOBAL SCRUTINY

On 11 December the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Venezuela (FFM) released a new report, documenting the continued commission of crimes against humanity by [Venezuelan](#) state agents under President Nicolás Maduro. These crimes form part of a decade-long, institutionalized strategy to silence dissent and maintain social and political control.

The report identifies the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB) as a key perpetrator of crimes against humanity, including persecution on political grounds. Investigators documented the excessive use of force by GNB agents during country-wide protests that erupted in 2014 and during similar protests in 2017, 2019 and 2024. The FFM further detailed enduring patterns of mass arbitrary detentions, sexual and gender-based violence, torture and other forms of ill-treatment of real or perceived opponents over the past 11 years. Systematic violations, including those committed in GNB-run detention facilities, are facilitated by what the FFM describes as “a pattern of structural impunity sustained by systemic failures within the Venezuelan judicial system.”

These findings come amid a marked decline in international oversight and accountability mechanisms. On 1 December the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) announced the closure of its in-country office in Caracas, pointing to the government's lack of genuine commitment to advancing accountability. Although the ICC's investigation into crimes against humanity remains ongoing, on 11 December Venezuela's National Assembly initiated discussions on withdrawing from the Rome Statute. On 16 December UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk announced that, despite sustained efforts to secure full access, no international staff remain in Venezuela to carry out his Office's monitoring and technical assistance mandate.

Against this backdrop, escalating military tensions between the United States (US) and Venezuelan governments are further endangering civilians. According to Human Rights Watch, since mid-September the US military has conducted at least 23 lethal military strikes in the Caribbean Sea, resulting in the extrajudicial killing of an estimated 87 people. While the Trump administration has justified these operations as targeting drug trafficking networks allegedly linked to the Venezuelan government, High Commissioner Türk has warned that these strikes violate international law. Simultaneously, Venezuelan authorities have used external military pressure to justify the adoption of legislation granting emergency powers to President Maduro and to intensify the coerced enlistment of civilians into Bolivarian militias.

Addressing crimes against humanity in Venezuela requires consistent international scrutiny on the multidimensional human rights protection gaps. Cross-regional UN member states, including Latin American and European governments, should identify a coordinated strategy to demand the government cooperate with international human rights and accountability mechanisms and take concrete steps, including through universal jurisdiction, to hold perpetrators to account. Cross-regional member states must also equally oppose any military action.

MILITARY JUNTA CONTINUES TO TARGET CIVILIANS AS ELECTIONS LOOM IN MYANMAR

Ahead of [elections](#) scheduled to begin on 28 December, the [Myanmar \(Burma\)](#) military junta has continued to escalate its attacks on civilians across the country. On 5 December the junta carried out an airstrike on a tea shop in Mayakan village, Sagaing Region, killing at least 18 civilians and injuring more than 20 others. According to residents, the strike occurred as villagers gathered to watch a football match. Two bombs dropped by a jet fighter hit shortly after air raid sirens sounded, leaving no time for civilians to escape. At least one five-year-old child and two schoolteachers were among those killed. The strike also damaged surrounding homes and civilian infrastructure.

In a separate airstrike on a hospital in Mrauk-U town in Rakhine State, the junta killed at least 33 people, including patients, medical workers and children, and injured over 70 others. The UN Human Rights Council-mandated International Independent Mechanism on Myanmar is seeking further information from witnesses, noting that the strike may be among the deadliest attacks on a hospital since the February 2021 military coup. The World Health Organization reports that at least 67 attacks on medical facilities have occurred in Myanmar this year alone. Attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, including medical and healthcare facilities, is prohibited under international law and may amount to war crimes.

In the weeks leading up to the elections, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has documented new waves of acute insecurity and violence, ongoing arrests and detentions of opponents, voter coercion, the extensive use of electronic surveillance tools and systemic discrimination. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk warned, “I fear this process will only further deepen insecurity, fear and polarization.” Approximately 56 townships where martial law remains in force will be excluded from the elections, as the junta escalates its targeting of civilians in attempts to retake territory held by a range of ethnic resistance organizations (EROs). EROs – including the Arakan Army, which controls nearly all of Rakhine State – have also been accused of abuses against civilians that may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Amid ongoing atrocities, the forthcoming elections and the approaching five-year anniversary of the coup, the UN Security Council (UNSC) last week postponed its closed consultations on Myanmar. Sarah Hunter, the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect’s Myanmar expert, said, “Having adopted only one resolution on the current situation in Myanmar to date, the Council must play a more strategic role in addressing the crisis. The Council has allowed geopolitical tensions and China’s engagement with the junta to dilute its response. It is imperative that the UNSC hold the meeting on Myanmar in a public, open format, with the participation of civil society organizations working tirelessly to secure justice, accountability and an end to the atrocities.”