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DECREASE IN VIOLENCE IN EASTERN DRC

MONTHLY REPORT N°46 - AUGUST 2021

166 violent deaths (↓31% from July 2021)
125 people abducted or kidnapped (↓33%)
64 clashes (↓7%)

The Kivu Security Tracker (KST) recorded a drop in violence in August compared with July for all incident types. While this overall trend is encouraging, it remains difficult to pinpoint a single reason for

this drop given the mixed picture from one area to the next. [The state of siege, which came into force on May 6 in the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri](#) (In French), does not appear in any case to be able to explain all of the changes.

Of the three provinces covered by KST, it is South Kivu - the only one not in a state of siege - which recorded the greatest respite: there were eleven civilian deaths, just over one third of the total logged in July (29 civilian deaths) and half of the average for this province since 2017. However, significant tension remains in highland areas.

In North Kivu and Ituri, the situation is also very mixed. The territories of Beni and Irumu, in which the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in particular are active, remain by far the most lethal for civilians - accounting for 63% of all civilian deaths. A fall in the number of killings was also observed but remains high: this death toll is higher than that of June and even April, prior to the implementation of the state of siege.

In the territory of Djugu, the Congo Economic Development Cooperative - Union of Revolutionaries for the Defense of the Congolese People (CODECO-URDPC), the most violent armed group in the area, has carried out fewer civilian killings. However, other CODECO factions have been more active, and the FARDC has been responsible for more civilian deaths in this territory, in particular due to aerial bombardments - a practice which started in July. The increasing militarization of the conflict in this territory jeopardizes any sustainable progress.

Lastly, in the area known as the Petit Nord (the territories of Walikale, Masisi, Rutshuru and Nyiragongo), the respite seems to be more robust, both in the number of civilian deaths

and clashes, including those involving the FARDC. This is probably due to a different strategy by the authorities, along with a willingness to enter into dialogue with some armed groups in order to create divisions within groups, to incite them to join governmental forces, or to surrender some of their men. Even in this area, progress remains fragile: no head of an armed group has surrendered, and only some groups have benefitted from the "diplomacy" of the authorities. However, a hundred or so militia members did in fact surrender in August, which might be an opportunity for the [new Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Program \(P-DDRCS\)](#), created in July, if it manages to achieve rapid results.

Djugu: The FARDC Bombards, the CODECO Consolidates

Contrary to most other territories, FARDC operations increased in August in Djugu, both against armed groups and civilians: the FARDC were also implicated in nine incidents, compared with two in the previous month.

This upswing appears to be due in part to [the attack on a delegation of the FARDC Inspectorate-General at the end of July in the village of Kilo](#). Following this attack, and the fact that militia members were now equipped with new weapons (in particular PKM-type machine guns), the FARDC carried out helicopter air raids, for the first time since the implementation of the state of siege on May 6. They also waged a campaign against the CODECO-URDPC in the vicinity of Mongwalu. The leaders of CODECO-URDPC requested a ceasefire, which was rejected by the FARDC, following which this armed group asked for reinforcements from other CODECO factions: the Defense Force against the Balkanization of the Congo (FDBC), Bon temple de Dieu (BTD), and the Alliance for the Liberation of the Congo (ALC). As a result, these groups became much more active: they were implicated in seven incidents during the month of August, more than during the four previous months combined.

The Chini ya Kilima-Patriotic and Integrationist Force of Congo (FPIC), usually based in the neighboring territory of Irumu, also joined forces with the CODECO-URDPC: they took part in a clash in the territory of Djugu for the first time: [the attack on a poorly defended FARDC position in the village of Itendey](#). Ten militia members and three FARDC soldiers were killed in this clash, during which [the general referral hospital was also looted](#) (in French).

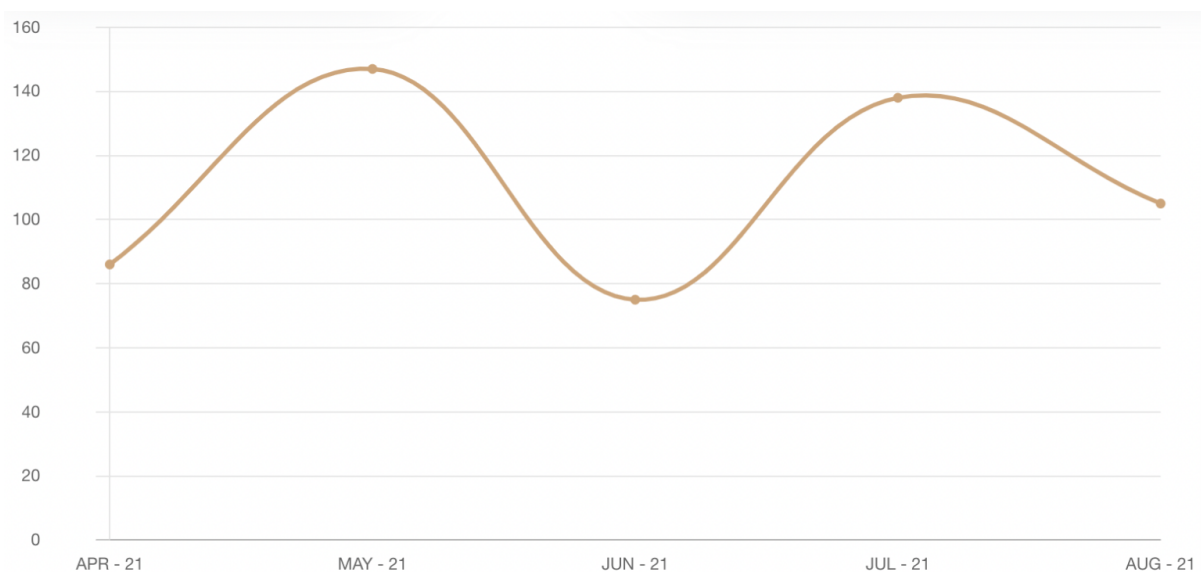
In reaction, FARDC military helicopters bombarded areas suspected of harboring CODECO militia members, which led to [property damage and casualties in the villages of Nyangarai \(7 civilians killed\) and Kobu](#) on August 18.

Also, several CODECO attacks targeted mining plots, [such as in the village of Lisey](#) on August 12. The attackers carried out looting and kidnapped three Chinese workers and two FARDC soldiers. They demanded a ransom of USD 6,000 to free the three Chinese nationals.

Lastly, [members of five communities \(the Alur, Hema, Ndo-Okebo, Mambisa and Nyali-Kilo\), who have come together under the name "G5", have expressed their willingness to assist the FARDC](#) (in French). The possible creation of community militias risks rekindling tensions.

Irumu and Beni: the Number of Killings Falls Yet Remains High

The territories of Beni and Irumu, in which the ADF in particular are active, are once again the deadliest in the eastern DRC. They accounted for the violent deaths of 105 civilians (67 in the territory of Beni and 38 in that of Irumu), constituting 63% of the violent deaths logged by KST in August.



Number of civilians killed per month in the territories of Beni and Irumu since April 2021

This number is lower than that for the month of July (138 civilian deaths were recorded in both of these territories) yet remains higher than June (75 civilian deaths) or April (86 civilian deaths), prior to the implementation of the state of siege.

Similar to July, National Road 4, which links the town of Beni to that of Komanda, was particularly impacted. The village of Idohu, located on this road, recorded the deadliest incident of the month with [the killing of sixteen civilians](#) by armed men suspected of belonging to the ADF.

This situation compelled MONUSCO and the FARDC to carry out joint escorts on this road with civilian vehicles from August 7.

MONUSCO also announced having carried out a [joint offensive with the FARDC against ADF positions](#) (in French), with air support. The FARDC made repeated announcements that they had killed 45 ADF members (on August 11 in Butembo, through Captain Anthony Mwalushayi then on [August 13, through Brigadier General Sylvain Ekenge](#), in

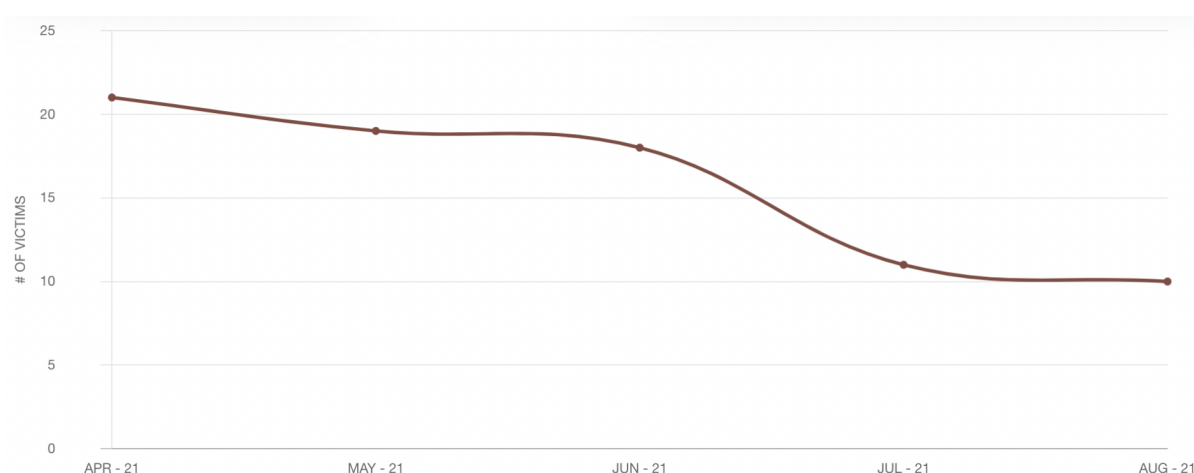
French) and the retaking of the ADF strongholds at Mwalika, with MONUSCO air support. However, KST has still not been able to independently confirm this.

Despite such initiatives, the number of clashes logged by KST has remained virtually stable compared with July, with eleven similar incidents, including eight carried out by the ADF.

Lubero, Walikale, Masisi, Rutshuru and Nyiragongo: A Marked Drop in Violence

Nearly all types of violent incidents have fallen in the territories comprising the Petit Nord: the violent deaths of twelve civilians was logged in August (compared with 25 in July), 19 clashes were recorded (compared with 23), seven civilians were abducted (compared with 20), nine victims of kidnapping for ransom were logged (compared with 27).

This drop in violence might be connected to the steady drop in FARDC operations in the area since the state of siege.



Number of clashes implicating the FARDC per month in the territories of Lubero, Walikale, Masisi, Rutshuru and Nyiragongo since April 2021

It may be that the civil responsibilities given to the FARDC in the framework of the state of siege have played a part in diverting them from the battle field. However, and undoubtedly of more significance, the FARDC seem to have adopted a different approach in this area, favoring dialogue with armed groups.

This strategy is not entirely new: for several years and until mid-2020, the FARDC relied on an alliance with the Nduma Defense of Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) of Guidon Shimiray. From July 2020, the FARDC partnered with a dissident NDC-R group, led by Gilbert Bwira - an alliance still in existence today.

But this rationale seems to have been strengthened during the state of siege. The Congolese army has built closer ties with other groups such as the Patriotic Front for Peace/People's Army (FPP/AP) of Kabidon (KST researchers have found that they share

some positions in the south of Lubero territory) and to a lesser extent, the Mai-Mai Kifuafua. As for the NDC-R/Bwira, they have established a new headquarters in the strategic town of Kalembe, at the intersection of the territories of Walikale, Masisi and Rutshuru.

The FARDC have also had discussions to motivate armed groups to surrender, with some success, such as with the Mai-Mai Kifuafua, Mai-Mai Mac, and even the NDC-R of Guidon Shimiray.

According to a military source, 142 combatants are reported to have surrendered in August and are billeted at the Biruwe military camp, in the territory of Walikale (including 68 of Guidon Shimiray's men on August 30). Such surrenders have not included the heads of armed groups for the time being. Some of these heads, such as Guidon Shimiray, have also conditioned their own surrender on requirements that are contrary to the new [P-DDRCS, created in July](#), such as an amnesty and integration of his men with recognition of their grades.

Lastly, the dialogue initiated by the authorities does not include all the armed groups. The FARDC have continued to attack the Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo (APCLS), sometimes with the support of the NDC-R/Bwira and the Nyatura Delta, who share an alliance with the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR).

Fizi, Mwenga and Uvira: The FARDC Attack the Headquarters of Armed Groups

Contrary to the rest of the province of South Kivu, the number of clashes involving the FARDC rose in August in the territories comprising the high and middle plateaus (eight such incidents, compared with seven in July) and these clashes were focused on the headquarters of various belligerents.

At the start of August, the FARDC [launched an assault against the headquarters of the Mai-Mai Buhirwa](#) and the Mai-Mai Mwenyemali in Rudaga and Kahanda in the middle plateaus of Lemera.

Subsequently, in the week from August 12 to 17, the FARDC [launched military operations against some Twigwaneho combatants](#). On August 12, the FARDC attacked their positions in the villages of Mikalati, Kangwe, Ngoma, Kanagananga and Mizinga. This attack left 21 dead and injured from the ranks of the Twigwaneho led by Michel Rukunda, aka Mekanika, and nine dead and six injured from the FARDC.

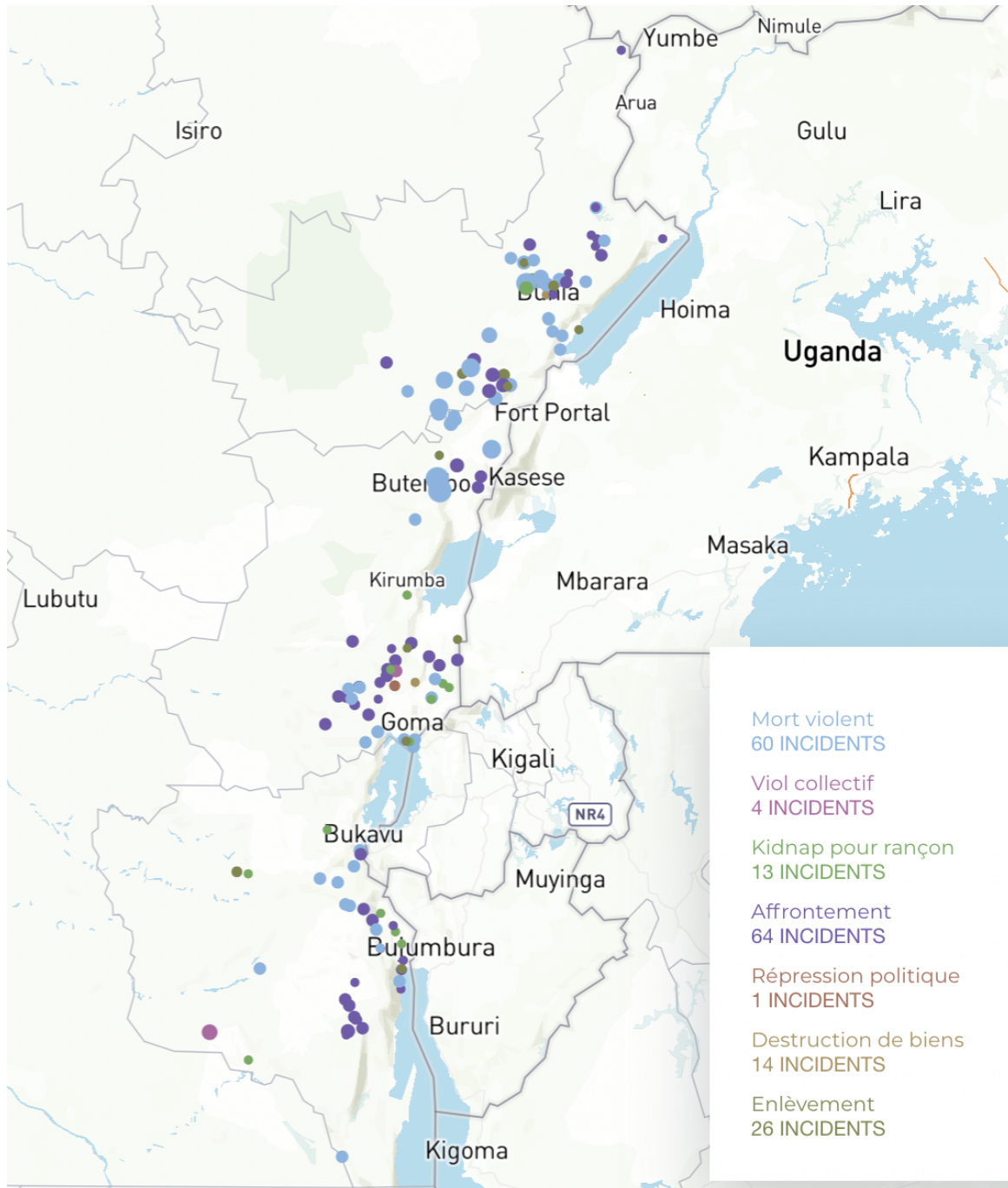
Two days later, [the Twigwaneho-Mekanika attacked the FARDC](#) in the villages of Mizinga and Kangwe, without managing to retake the positions previously lost to the FARDC.

Lastly, [on August 15, the FARDC chased the Twigwaneho-Mekanika from the town of Kamombo, where they had been headquartered for more than a year](#), with the help of the Mai-Mai Mutetezi.

This attack could be seen as a reply to [the assault by the Twigwaneho-Mekanika against FARDC positions in Minembwe on July 11](#). FARDC operations could also have been

encouraged by the direct participation of senior staff: according to several reports, General François Ngoy, Acting Head of the Operational Sector Sokola II South Kivu in Uvira, is reported to have supervised the operations, seconded by General Patrick Opya.

Clashes between armed groups were also reported, most notably between an alliance of the Mai-Mai Ilunga and Mai-Mai Mupekenya on the one hand, and the Twigwaneho on the other in Mugogo on August 27. On August 28, the Mai-Mai Ilunga and the Mai-Mai Mupekenya clashed in the village of Kateja, in all likelihood over the [sharing of cows taken from Mugogo](#).



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