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DR Congo Investigations Needed More Than Ever

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UN Funding Crisis Should Not Delay Commission of Inquiry

On Monday, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk gave the chilling preliminary [findings](#) of his office's Fact-Finding Mission into the devastating impact on civilians of the armed conflict in eastern [Democratic Republic of Congo](#).

Since the Rwanda-backed M23 armed group captured Goma and Bukavu, the provincial capitals of North and South Kivu in early 2025, the Fact-Finding Mission has received information on the M23 carrying out extrajudicial executions, torture, raids on hospitals, abductions, and forced displacement and recruitment. They also received reports of arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances of alleged M23 supporters by Congolese military intelligence, and summary killings, arbitrary arrests, abductions, and extortion by the Wazalendo coalition of armed groups supported by the Congolese government.

Sexual violence, already [occurring at an alarming rate](#), is being used “as a means of reprisal against communities, the relatives of perceived opponents, and people from other ethnic groups,” said Türk. “Nearly 40 percent of [sexual violence] survivors ... are children.”

Many of these findings match our own. Human Rights Watch has documented the M23's [summary execution](#) of at least 21 civilians in Goma in February. We have also [reported](#) on widespread abuses against civilians by the Wazalendo in South Kivu, including beatings, killings, and extortion, at times on an ethnic basis.

The UN Human Rights Council [launched](#) the human rights office's Fact-Finding Mission in February, which is to be followed by an independent Commission of Inquiry to investigate abuses committed by all parties to the conflict.

But Türk also announced on Monday that – due to the UN's financial crisis – setting up the Commission of Inquiry would likely be delayed until 2026. This risks creating a protection gap, which would pose a major setback for desperately needed documentation of abuses in eastern Congo, particularly at a time when the M23 and other warring parties are [increasingly repressing](#) civil society groups and the media.

The commission's mandate to collect and preserve evidence, to identify those responsible for grave abuses, and to support efforts to hold them accountable is a vital step towards ending impunity.

The UN's unprecedented financial crisis is not just about abstract financial calculations: it will have a real impact on the lives of people at risk. As horrific crimes continue unabated in eastern Congo, robust investigations and accountability are needed now more than ever.

Associated documents

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Congo, Democratic Republic

Article on preliminary findings of UN human rights commission on impact of armed conflict on civilians in North and South Kivu; call for commission of inquiry

[En RD Congo, des enquêtes plus que jamais nécessaires](#) (Appeal or News Release, French)

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