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COI QUERY

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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Security situation in Kasai Central region

1. Background

In 2016, a conflict erupted in the Kasai region following clashes between state security forces and customary leader *Kamuina Nsapu* (also called *Kamwina Nsapu*) and his supporters.¹ Violence began due to the government disputing the ruling family over the nomination of Kamuina Nsapu as customary Chief in the Dibaya territory and had imposed another political figure.² The ‘heavy-handed government response against Kamuina Nsapu contributed to the escalation of the conflict’ through an ‘armed uprising’ against the state security forces and the creation of numerous local rebel groups.³

The conflict, known as the ‘*Kamwina Nsapu* Rebellion’, lasted from 2016 till 2019.⁴ According to the UN Human Rights Council, ‘several thousand people were killed, countless acts of violence were committed against civilians and entire villages were set on fire and plundered’.⁵ The conflict displaced approximately 1.4 million people in the region and approximately 35 000 people sought refuge in Angola.⁶ The conflict ended in early 2019, after Félix Tshisekedi, who had origins from the Kasai region, was sworn in as Congo’s new president. This was seen as a victory by Kamuina Nsapu groups and many of them decided to lay down their arms.⁷

According to Mercy Corps in June 2019, ‘insecurity is still rife in many parts of Kasai Central and Kasai and the freedom of movement restricted. The potential for violent incidents remains high in certain areas due to the presence of ex-combatants who have gotten used to militia life and have few other livelihood options’.⁸ Action Against Hunger reported in February 2023 that displaced persons returned home despite facing food insecurity and precarious sanitary conditions.⁹

¹ Trial, DRC – Kasai: Political And Military Leaders Standing Trial For War Crimes And Crimes Against Humanity, 21 May 2024, [url](#); Al Jazeera, DR Congo: Child soldiers and the conflict in Kasai-Central, 29 July 2019, [url](#)

² Mercy Corps, Kasai Conflict Assessment: Current Dynamics & Potential Interventions (February-March 2019), 10 June 2019, [url](#), p. 4

³ Mercy Corps, Kasai Conflict Assessment: Current Dynamics & Potential Interventions (February-March 2019), 10 June 2019, [url](#), p. 5

⁴ Action Against Hunger, Kasai Locals Rebuild Livelihoods After Years of Displacement, 16 February 2023, [url](#)

⁵ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the team of international experts on the situation in Kasai (24 June to 12 July 2019), 7 May 2019, [url](#), p. 1

⁶ UN, Report of the Team of international experts on the situation in the Kasai regions, Advanced Edited Version, 3 July 2018, [url](#), p. 16

⁷ Mercy Corps, Kasai Conflict Assessment: Current Dynamics & Potential Interventions (February-March 2019), 10 June 2019, [url](#), p. 5

⁸ Mercy Corps, Kasai Conflict Assessment: Current Dynamics & Potential Interventions (February-March 2019), 10 June 2019, [url](#), p. 7

⁹ Action Against Hunger, Kasai Locals Rebuild Livelihoods After Years of Displacement, 16 February 2023, [url](#)

2. Political developments

Information on political developments was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints of this query. However, the following information may be relevant.

In December 2023, incumbent DRC president Felix Tshisekedi was re-elected with more than 70 % of the votes.¹⁰ Tshisekedi is from the Kasai region and, according to sources, he enjoyed popular support in his native region, as well as in Kinshasa.¹¹ Mbote.cd, a local news source, reported that, in the run-up to the elections held in December 2023, the president of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI, *Commission électorale Nationale Indépendante*) expressed his concern regarding the [informal translation] ‘political intolerance’ that has developed in the country in the run-up to the elections.¹²

According to the 2024 BTI country report by Bertelsmann Stiftung on the DRC, ‘political elites manipulate and even exacerbate existing tensions to shore up their own power’, which has been the case in eastern areas of Kasai, ‘where national elites have frequently aggravated ethnic tensions in tandem with local allies’.¹³

3. Security developments, including security incidents

Between 1 January 2023 and 17 May 2024,¹⁴ the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) documented 17 violent incidents¹⁵ in the Kasai Central province, two of which were coded as battles, 14 as riots, and one as violence against civilians. ACLED recorded 44 fatalities since 1 January 2023 related to the security situation.¹⁶

Examples of security incidents in the Kasai Central region during the reference period, include:

¹⁰ France24, DR Congo's Tshisekedi wins second term in landslide victory, 31 December 2023, [url](#); AP, Congo's President Felix Tshisekedi is declared winner of election that opposition wants redone, 31 December 2023, [url](#)

¹¹ Al Jazeera, Analysis: Has DR Congo's Tshisekedi delivered enough to win a second term?, 14 December 2023, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Elections in DR Congo: Reducing the Risk of Violence, 30 October 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹² Mbote.cd, Attaques contre Delly Sessanga et le siège de Nouvel Elan : la CENI déplore le climat d'intolérance politique à la veille des élections, 31 July 2023, [url](#)

¹³ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI, Country Report for 2024 –Democratic Republic of the Congo, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 34

¹⁴ ACLED data provided in this query refer to the timeframe between 1 January 2023 and 17 May 2024. Data from after 17 May 2024 was not available at the time of publishing of this query response. Data on violent incidents provided is based on EUAA analysis of publicly available curated datasets from ACLED; ACLED, About Acled, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁵ For the purpose of this COI Query Response, only the following types of events were included as violent incidents in the Kasai Central region: battles, riots, and violence against civilians.

¹⁶ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Cameroon, 1 January 2023 – 17 May 2024, [url](#)

- On 5 May 2024, the ‘Songyie Bambembele’ and ‘Bena Kasasa’ communal militias clashed in Lubi in Kasai-Central, over a territorial boundary conflict, in which at least 30 people were killed.¹⁷
- On the week of 24 April 2023, mob violence erupted in Dimbelenge territory in Kasai-Central between residents from different communes over a land tenure feud. Several people were killed and others injured. Many houses were burned while more than a hundred of people were displaced and 3 fatalities were reported.¹⁸
- Between 20 and 22 April 2024, residents from different communes clashed in Dimbelenge territory in Kasai Central over a land dispute. Houses were set on fire, and three fatalities and an unspecified number of deaths and injuries were reported.¹⁹

The United States Department of State (USDOS) report on human rights practices covering the year 2023 noted that in the Kasai region, state security forces and armed groups operated in the remote mining areas and profited financially from the illegal trade in minerals.²⁰ In September 2023 Doctors Without Borders noted that sexual violence remained a [informal translation] ‘worrying reality’.²¹

Media sources reported an incident in July 2023 in Kananga, Central Kasai, in which the president of political party *Envol*, Delly Sesanga, denounced an attempt of aggression against him because of political reasons.²² On 13 June 2023, supporters of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS, *Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social*) engaged in disturbances, including setting a vehicle on fire around the Provincial Assembly of the Kasai Central region.²³ Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported another incident in which alleged supporters of the UDPS attacked Martin Fayulu, the opposition presidential candidate when he was going to Tshikapa in Kasai province.²⁴ During the attack, which included the throwing of rocks, at least two people and a policeman were injured.²⁵

A July 2022 briefing report by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees of Germany indicated that since 2020 until July 2022, there were occasional reports of inter-communal

¹⁷ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Cameroon, 1 January 2023 – 17 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Cameroon, 1 January 2023 – 17 May 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹ EUAA analysis based on publicly available ACLED data. ACLED, Curated Data Files, Cameroon, 1 January 2023 – 17 May 2024, [url](#)

²⁰ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 19

²¹ Médecins Sans Frontières, Violences sexuelles dans le Kasai Central « après le retrait de MSF, la mobilisation de tous les partenaires s'impose », 26 September 2023, [url](#)

²² Sud Express International, Delly Sesanga dénonce une tentative d'assassinat de sa personne, 30 July 2023, [url](#); Actu30, Sesanga sur l'attaque de son cortège à Kananga : « J'ai échappé à une tentative d'assassinat », 31 July 2023, [url](#); Actualite.cd, Kasai Central : Delly Sesanga dénonce une tentative de son assassinat à Kananga après l'attaque contre son cortège, 31 July 2023, [url](#)

²³ Actu30, Kasai Central / Manifestation des militants de l'UDPS : Un véhicule incendié à l'Assemblée provinciale, 13 June 2023, [url](#); Actualite.cd, Kasai Central: tension à l'assemblée provinciale, un bus incendié, pneus brûlés, députés provinciaux en débandade,... des militants munis des drapeaux de l'UDPS sont en colère, 13 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁴ HRW, DR Congo: Electoral Violence Threatens Vote, 16 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁵ HRW, DR Congo: Electoral Violence Threatens Vote, 16 December 2023, [url](#)

conflicts and land disputes in the Kasai region and Lualaba province.²⁶ According to International Crisis Group, the Kasai and Katanga ethnic groups clash frequently on local power dynamics and the economic potential of mining resources in the region.²⁷

For information on the security situation in North Kivu and South Kivu, see [EUAA, DRC, Security situation in North Kivu and South Kivu](#), published on 5 March 2024.

For information on the security situation in Kinshasa, see [EUAA, DRC, Security situation in Kinshasa](#), published on 22 February 2024.

For information on Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), see [EUAA, DRC, Sexual and gender-based violence \(SGBV\) against women, including sexual and domestic violence, conflict-related sexual violence, trafficking for sexual exploitation, traditional harmful practices, and early and forced marriage; legislation; social attitudes; availability of state protection; access to support services](#) published on 7 February 2024.

4. Humanitarian situation, including humanitarian access

Information on the humanitarian situation in Kasai Central province was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints of this query. However, the following information may be relevant.

An August 2023 report by the UN Human Rights Council indicated that inter-community conflicts related to traditional leadership in the Kasai region impacted the humanitarian situation.²⁸

Although prior to the reference period, according to a United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (UNOCHA) report, as of December 2022, 9.4 million people were in humanitarian need (35 % of the total population) in the Kasai Hub, a region consisting of seven provinces including Kasai Central.²⁹ The same source described that the 'humanitarian context is characterized by the persistence of sporadic inter-community conflicts linked to the management of customary power and land, recurrent food insecurity affecting 7.4 million people, the resurgence of epidemics, chronic malnutrition and the increase in cases of gender-based violence (GBV)'.³⁰ A UNOCHA report indicated that 2.03 million people were in general humanitarian need in the Kasai Central province, 2 million people were in need due to food insecurity, and over 500,000 people were in humanitarian need related to protection, as of December 2022.³¹

²⁶ Germany, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Briefing Notes: Group 62 - Information Centre for Asylum and Migration, 25 July 2022, [url](#), p. 3

²⁷ International Crisis Group, DR Congo: A Full Plate of Challenges after a Turbulent Vote, 26 January 2024, [url](#)

²⁸ UN, Technical assistance and capacity-building in the field of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 10 August 2023, [url](#), p. 6

²⁹ UNOCHA, Democratic Republic of the Congo – Hub-Kasai – Humanitarian Situation Overview, 4 April 2023, [url](#)

³⁰ UNOCHA, Democratic Republic of the Congo – Hub-Kasai – Humanitarian Situation Overview, 4 April 2023, [url](#)

³¹ UNOCHA, Democratic Republic of the Congo – Humanitarian Profile, 16 January 2023, [url](#), p. 1

5. Internal displacement

According to the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) report on displacement from October 2023, Kasai Central has 1.5 % of the internal displaced persons in the DRC, amounting to 103 585 persons.³² The same source indicated that 'intercommunal violence and conflict were reported as the primary drivers of displacement in the province' and 'over half' of all internal displaced persons were identified in the areas of Masuika and Demba.³³

Additional information on internal displacement in the Kasai Central province could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints of this query.

³² IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix - DRC – Countrywide Displacement Overview, 26 October 2023, [url](#), p. 2

³³ IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix - DRC – Countrywide Displacement Overview, 26 October 2023, [url](#), p. 7

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