

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	792
Land:	Den Demokratiske Republik Congo
Kilde:	OHCHR
Titel:	UN Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights alarmed at situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo
Udgivet:	22. februar 2023
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	30. august 2023

Document #2087836

OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (Author)

UN Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights alarmed at situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

KINSHASA/NEW YORK (22 February 2023) – The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Ilze Brands Kehris, concluded today her official visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the capital, Kinshasa, and the eastern cities of Goma and Bunia. She expressed alarm at the deteriorating security situation in the east of the country, where the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and various other armed groups, including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Cooperative for the Development of the Congo (CODECO) and Zaire, continue to engage in brutal attacks against civilians. Documented human rights violations and abuses include mass killings, mutilations and conflict-related sexual violence, causing massive displacement and enduring trauma.

“I strongly condemn these appalling attacks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and echo the Secretary-General’s call last weekend for ‘action for peace’ in Africa. The violence must stop. I also strongly encourage the authorities to redouble their efforts to counter rising hatred and implement targeted initiatives to promote trust and cohesion within and between communities,” she said.

The resurgence of attacks by the M23 in North Kivu province in recent months has taken a particularly devastating toll on the population. The hostilities in North Kivu have also led to a redeployment of Government troops that has created a security vacuum in other areas affected by conflicts, allowing other armed groups to gain ground and spread terror in towns, villages and camps for displaced people. This fraught environment has fostered misinformation, prejudice and hate speech against specific ethnic groups and risks inciting further violence.

“In Goma and Bunia, I was struck by the determination of victims, representatives of civil society and communities affected by conflict to chart a new path. I listened to their individual accounts of violence and proposals for action. And I listened intently to their calls for how the United Nations and the international community can help the Congolese people and Government end conflicts and address present and past traumas,” Brands Kehris added.

In Ituri province, the senior UN human rights official was deeply distressed by the living conditions of the people forced by armed conflict to flee their homes. Many women, men and children at a camp for internally displaced people, near Bunia, were in dire need of food, medical care and psychosocial

support. The situation is even worse for the most vulnerable – those who have been mutilated, older people and others.

“In the country with the world’s third-largest number of displaced people, often years-long stays in precarious conditions are a stark reminder that meeting basic humanitarian needs is a human rights issue,” stressed Brands Kehris.

For children affected by conflict and displacement, the lack of access to schooling is, on its own, a violation of their right to education, one which has a lasting impact on their lives. It also increases their risk of exposure to criminal activity and makes them further vulnerable to recruitment into the same armed groups that traumatized their childhood.

Mass killings, mutilations and conflict-related sexual violence are ongoing. Survivors of gruesome violence and other abuses told the Assistant Secretary-General that they feel abandoned and forgotten. Expressing their pain and frustration, one victim told her that the international community did not seem to recognize their suffering.

“In this challenging context, military responses to the threat of armed groups should prioritize the protection of civilians. In addition, respect for human rights and international humanitarian law by all forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is not only their obligation, but also makes them more effective,” she said.

Brands Kehris reiterated the continued readiness of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to help with the establishment of an appropriate compliance framework for security forces. “We look forward to engaging with the East African Community Regional Force, endorsed by the African Union, in close coordination with MONUSCO and the Congolese armed forces,” she added.

During her 10-day visit, the Assistant Secretary-General met with Prime Minister Sama Lukonde, the presidents of the National Assembly and Senate, and other senior Government officials, including the ministers responsible for justice, human rights and national defence. She also met with the military governors of the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri, senior military and civilian justice officials, community leaders, civil society organizations, including victims’ associations, as well as representatives of the diplomatic community, the East African Community Regional Force and the UN system, especially the UN Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

Brands Kehris welcomed recent progress in the transitional justice process, in particular through the popular consultations held in several provinces, as “a clear sign of hope for the future.” These “important steps,” she said, “show the will of the Congolese people to meaningfully come to terms with traumas of the past and set a new foundation for peace and stability.”

The UN senior official added, “in order to be effective, transitional justice initiatives, based on a holistic approach, must focus even more on the needs and participation of victims, and should be implemented in coordination with the Government’s Disarmament, Demobilisation, Community Rehabilitation and Stabilisation Programme (P-DDRCS). Such initiatives and related programmes are complex and require adequate resources from national authorities and their partners. I appeal to all partners of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to make support for the country’s transitional justice process one of their priority areas. Without efforts to address the root causes of conflict, the human rights and humanitarian crises could worsen dramatically.”

As the Democratic Republic of the Congo prepares for elections scheduled for December 2023, Brands Kehris stressed that officials and politicians from all sides have a responsibility to contribute to ensuring free, fair and inclusive elections. The Assistant Secretary-General called for the protection of civic space, expressing her deep concern over the increased pressure on journalists and human rights defenders. She urged all political stakeholders to safeguard an environment in which all Congolese people can exercise their rights to freely express themselves, to peacefully assemble and to cast their vote,” adding that “it is critical for all to avoid instrumentalizing intercommunal tensions, including through misinformation, which could further increase the risk of violence.”

In addition, having heard first-hand accounts of Congolese citizens being prevented from registering to vote due to their ethnicity or displacement, she urged the authorities to take all necessary measures to ensure that registration is open and accessible to all, including for people forced to leave their homes due to violence.

Brands Kehris praised positive developments on legal reforms, particularly the adoption and the promulgation of laws on the rights of indigenous peoples and people living with disabilities. While welcoming the commitment of the Congolese authorities, she encouraged them to continue to provide their citizens with a legal framework that protects their fundamental rights and to ensure the effective implementation of the adopted laws.

As MONUSCO prepares for its transition, she affirmed that the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the country will continue supporting the Government to consolidate progress made in the fight against impunity, the implementation of the recently adopted human rights-related laws, and the implementation of the transitional justice process.

“Guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose 75th anniversary we celebrate this year, the UN Human Rights Office stands ready to continue our work to support the country in its efforts to overcome the human rights challenges that remain. That is our firm commitment, and one I expressed personally in meetings throughout my visit,” concluded the Assistant Secretary-General.

ecoi.net description:

According to UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Ilze Brands Kehris, M23 and other armed groups continue attacks against civilians in the country's east

Country:

Congo, Democratic Republic

Source:

[OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (Author)

Original link:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/un-assistant-secretary-general-human-rights-alarmed-situation-eastern>

Document type:

Appeal or News Release

Language:

English

Published:

22 February 2023

Available on ecoi.net since:

7 March 2023

Document ID:

2087836

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

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041
Wien
T +43 1 589 00 583
F +43 1 589 00 589
info@ecoi.net

Contact
Imprint & Disclaimer
F.A.Q.
Data Protection Notice

ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

