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MSF appeals for humanitarian access in Goma as casualties seek medical care

Goma/Kinshasa- An influx of wounded people is arriving at Kyeshero hospital in Goma, [Democratic Republic of Congo](#) (DRC). Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) teams in the hospital are treating people through the [armed clashes](#) and insecurity that have hit the city in recent days. We have been affected by several incidents since the beginning of the week, some of which have limited our ability to provide people with the medical care they need. We are now preparing to send new teams to Goma and need guaranteed humanitarian access from the involved parties.

Fighting between M23, the Congolese army, and their respective allies reached Goma's city centre earlier this week, causing panic and impacting residents. Goma, the capital city of North Kivu province, has been cut off from the rest of the world for several days, and victims of the fighting are arriving at medical facilities whenever they can.

Humanitarian and medical facilities have not been spared during the violence.

"At Kyeshero hospital, a bullet pierced the roof of the operating theatre during an operation," says Virginie Napolitano, MSF's emergency coordinator in North Kivu, speaking from Goma. "Several of our stocks of equipment and medicines have been looted, jeopardising our medical assistance inside and outside Goma. Armed looting has also affected our colleagues in Goma. One of them was wounded by gunshot in his home during an attack. Other organisations and medical facilities have also come under fire. This is totally unacceptable."

Despite the situation, an MSF team continues to provide care for wounded patients at Kyeshero hospital, in support of Ndosho hospital,

where the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is receiving an even greater influx of wounded.

Since Thursday, 142 wounded patients have been treated at Kyeshero. On Tuesday alone, MSF received 37 injured people, half of them civilians and most civilians are women. Most of the injuries were caused by shrapnel, while other patients suffered gunshot wounds.

Since Friday, people have had to cope with continuous water and electricity cuts. The supply of meals that MSF provides to patients and their families is in jeopardy, as insecurity, the risk of looting, and the closure of roads are preventing us from replenishing food stocks, which only last two to three days.

The worsening insecurity and intense fighting have forced MSF to temporarily reduce the number of active teams in Goma and in the camps for [internally displaced people](#) on the outskirts of the city. Meanwhile, medical and humanitarian needs in and around Goma will only grow. In recent weeks, tens of thousands of people have joined the 650,000 people who had already been living in camps around Goma for more than two years. Fighting has also reached areas around camps, sending people fleeing once again.

“The impact of this fighting on the civilian population is enormous. In addition to the wounded and dead, we are receiving devastating reports from internally displaced people camps where our teams can no longer go,” says Stephan Goetghebuer, MSF’s head of programmes in North Kivu. “In the Kanyaruchinya displaced people’s site, the health centre we support continues to operate, but the team has seen two children die this week because they could not be transferred to any hospital.”

MSF is preparing to send teams back into Goma to assess what response can be provided, and how best we could scale up, following the looting of the past few days. We would like to replenish our stocks and scale up emergency care as soon as possible. One possible way to move new teams and equipment into Goma would be through the Great Barrier, which separates DRC from Rwanda. This requires facilitation and guarantees from the involved parties.

As the situation continues to deteriorate, MSF urges the warring parties to do more to protect civilians. They must also respect the most basic rules of international humanitarian law and guarantee humanitarian access, so that essential medical assistance can be provided to people.

MSF teams are still present in other conflict-affected areas of both North and South Kivu provinces.

Nord-Kivu province: Several wounded people treated by MSF in Goma, as fighting between Congolese armed forces and the armed group M23 has reached the city

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