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DRC: Deepening human rights crisis amid reports of further M23 advances

31 January 2025

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FROM

**Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Jeremy
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LOCATION

Geneva

The human rights crisis in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to deepen, as hostilities between the armed forces and the Rwandan-backed M23 armed group expand towards South Kivu following the M23's takeover of Goma. Reports indicate that M23 has progressed further south towards Bukavu.

Since the start of the crisis, bombs have struck at least two IDP (internally displaced person) sites, causing civilian casualties. We have also documented summary executions of at least 12 people by M23 between 26 and 28 January.

Our Office has also documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence by the army and allied Wazalendo fighters in Kalehe territory. We are

verifying reports that 52 women were raped by Congolese troops in South Kivu, including alleged reports of gangrape.

In other areas under M23 control in South Kivu, such as Minova, M23 has occupied schools and hospitals, forced IDPs out of camps and subjected the civilian population to forced conscription and forced labour.

Additionally, DRC officials report that at least 165 women were raped by male inmates during the prison break by more than 4,000 inmates from Goma's Muzenze prison on 27 January, as M23 began its assault on the town.

Conflict-related sexual violence has been an appalling feature of armed conflict in eastern DRC for decades. High Commissioner Volker Türk is particularly concerned that this latest escalation risks deepening the risk of conflict-related sexual violence much further. The current widespread proliferation of weapons in Goma is exacerbating the already significant risks of serious violations and abuses.

We continue to receive urgent requests from civilians for protection and are working with UN colleagues and other partners to ensure their safety.

As M23 reportedly advances towards Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu, the High Commissioner calls for an end to the violence and for all parties to uphold their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law. It is crucial that there are investigations into the commission of violations, with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice and ensuring comprehensive accountability.

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