

Summary

The eastern DRC is experiencing the worst levels of violence since 2017. In 2023, 2750 civilians have been killed in the region. The scarce presence of Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) in Ituri and parts of North Kivu has facilitated the indiscriminate targeting of civilians. The UN has warned of possible bomb attacks in Kinshasa by the Islamic State affiliate Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Despite a ceasefire between the FARDC and the M23 rebel group, a renewed offensive by the latter in the near future is possible.

Recent events and developments

Interrelated crises in the eastern DRC threaten to further destabilize Ituri and North Kivu Provinces. Despite a lull in the activities of M23 in southern North Kivu since March 2023, the threat it poses has drawn many FARDC units into the region. In turn, this has created a security vacuum in northern North Kivu and Ituri, where the CODECO and ADF armed groups have increased attacks against civilians. On June 16, 2023, an ADF attack on a school in the Ugandan town of Mpondwe, adjacent to North Kivu, resulted in 41 people killed. This comes after a CODECO attack on the Lala IDP camp close to Bule, Ituri Province, led to the deaths of 45 residents on June 12. Between March and June 2023, 643 civilians have been killed in Ituri due to widespread violence. In the same period, 140 people have lost their lives in attacks perpetrated by the ADF in North Kivu. This is the highest level of violence in the region since 2017. In addition, while M23 has withdrawn from certain regions it had occupied, the UN claims that this has been a tactical withdrawal aimed at buying time. The UN has also claimed that in June the group once again assumed offensive positions on the ground.

Impact assessment

The recent offensive repositioning of M23 points to a potential resumption of fighting in the near future. During the last M23 offensive in March, the city of Goma was almost entirely cut off by land. If fighting resumes, the encirclement of Goma is possible. In any case, FARDC units will remain in the area in large numbers. The inability of the FARDC to simultaneously counter the current threats in the region signals that the activities of CODECO and ADF are likely to continue. Indiscriminate attacks on civilians, such as the one carried out on June 29 close to Mamove, North Kivu, which claimed 8 lives, should be expected. Specifically regarding the ADF, bomb attacks targeting civilian gatherings and government buildings are also possible. In the past, the group has carried out such actions, as was the case on January 15, 2023, when a church in Kasindi, North Kivu, was bombed, killing 14 people. In June, the UN claimed that the ADF sought to recruit and carry out attacks in Kinshasa and Tshopo, Haut-Uélé and South Kivu Provinces. Bomb attacks outside of North Kivu and Ituri are possible, including in the capital.

Advice from Forth Global

- Make sure all employees travelling to the DRC undertake a three-day HEAT training prior to deployment.
- Advise staff to avoid all non-essential travel to North Kivu and Ituri provinces. If travel is necessary, advise staff to plan their journey ahead, check the state of roads and travel with security detail in convoy.
- Advise staff to avoid governmental buildings, military bases, and crowded locations.
- If staff is located in Goma, test crisis response plans and evacuation procedures. Ensure security plans are updated and appropriately distributed to workers on the ground.
- Continuously monitor local news and liaise with local partners to stay up to date with any developments in the region.

Customized advice

Please contact us for specific advice:

+31 (0) 35 543 04 37

christiaan@forthglobal.com

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