



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Genocide Emergency: The Democratic Republic of the Congo October 2021

There are at least [120 armed groups](#) active in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.) due to a lack of effective governance. Historically persecuted minorities are still targeted today. In recent years, they have faced worsening violence.

In **Ituri**, the **Hema** have been targeted in what the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) said may [constitute genocide](#). Tensions between Lendu and Hema date back to the colonial era, when the Belgians gave the Hema a [higher social status](#). This conflict erupted into war from 1999 to 2003. In 2017, the death of a Lendu priest sparked [anti-Hema hate speech](#), including false accusations that Hema were planning to “exterminate” the Lendu. The Cooperative for Development of the Congo (CODECO), a Lendu militia, [attacked](#) Hema. They raped, beheaded, and mutilated victims and used body parts as [trophies](#). A [ceasefire](#) and a delegation of [ex-warlords](#) that President Félix Tshisekedi sent in 2020 to [negotiate](#) the demobilization of CODECO fighters have had [little effect](#). Instead, Ituri has seen a [surge in violence](#).

Luba of Kasai origin (Kasai-Luba) have experienced xenophobia in **former Katanga Province** since they resettled there under colonial rule. In the 1990s, after Katangan leaders ordered the expulsion of “non-natives,” over [5,000 Luba](#) were killed. In the 2000s, returning Kasaians faced [accusations of economic exploitation](#). The UNJHRO found that [37% of hate speech](#) in the D.R.C. targeted Luba in 2020. Congolese President Tshisekedi is a Kasai-Luba. Some Katangans—who supported his predecessor Joseph Kabila and felt [humiliated](#) by Tshisekedi's 2019 election win—have attacked Luba.

In **Kasai**, Luba face [persecution](#). Luba are seen as “outsiders.” The Luba *Kamiuna Nsapu* rebellion arose in 2016 following a chieftom dispute in Kasai Central Province. The rebellion caused a [humanitarian crisis](#). In 2017, state forces reacted with [excessive violence](#) against civilians, particularly Luba. The *Bana Mura*, a mainly ethnic Chokwe militia, joined state forces in **Kasai Province** and [targeted Luba](#) and the Lulua sub-group, using tactics aimed at [eliminating](#) them. The U.N. said all actors committed crimes against humanity. The *Bana Mura* subjected Luba to [persecution](#). The crisis subsided by 2018, but a 2020 report said some children [remained abducted](#). Recent clashes between Luba and Kuba could cause a [new crisis](#).

“**Banyarwanda**” or “Rwandophones” (groups originally from Rwanda) face persecution. The [Tutsis’ citizenship](#) is contested because some Tutsis arrived in the Congo [after independence in 1960](#). During the Congo Wars (1996-2003), the Rwandan army invaded the Congo (then named Zaire) to overthrow President Mobutu and to stop attacks by Rwandan Hutu exiles. Some Congolese Rwandophones joined the Rwandan army attacks against Rwandan Hutu militias, including remnants of the *Interahamwe*. Today, [all Rwandophones](#) remain associated with the Rwandan invasion. Allegations of Rwandan government support for Tutsi self-defense groups [increase anti-Tutsi sentiment](#). Non-Tutsi Congolese ethnic militias [oppose the return](#) of [50,000 Banyarwanda refugees](#) who have lived in camps in Rwanda since the 1990s. The extremist Hutu *Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda*, an offshoot of the genocidal *Interahamwe*, still [targets civilians](#).

The **Batwa forest people**, also known as “Pygmies,” face [persecution](#). [Exclusionary](#) policies have subjected them to [cultural genocide](#). Although Batwa hunting actually [promotes conservation](#), forest rangers use violence to deny them entry into forests that they rely on for sustenance. This year, the Congolese Parliament finally [passed](#) a law against [anti-Batwa discrimination](#).

U.S. [special forces](#) have offered to help the D.R.C. fight the country’s [deadliest](#) group, the [Islamist Allied Democratic Forces](#). The government’s “[state of siege](#)” has [failed](#) to end ethnic violence in Ituri and North Kivu.

The D.R.C. is at **Stage 5: Organization, Stage 6: Polarization, Stage 8: Persecution, and Stage 9: Extermination.**

Genocide Watch recommends that:

- The U.S. and E.U. help the U.N. and the D.R.C. government disband ethnic militias to prevent genocide.
- The U.N., the U.S., and the E.U. increase humanitarian aid for refugees and internally displaced persons.