



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

Genocide Emergency: The Democratic Republic of the Congo

August 2022

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.) has substantially escalated over the last several months, particularly in North Kivu and in South Kivu. Notably, Tutsi and other “Rwandophones” (also known as “Banyarwanda” or Kinyarwanda speakers) have recently come under increased threat of genocidal violence.

“Rwandophones” are groups considered to be historically of Rwandan origin. Whereas Hutu and Tutsi have mostly lived in **North Kivu** since the colonial era, the Banyamulenge, who are related to the Tutsi, have lived in **South Kivu** since before colonial rule. After Congolese independence in 1960, Rwandophones faced hostilities. Their citizenship was revoked in 1981. In the Congo Wars (1996-2003), Rwanda invaded the Congo to prevent Rwandan Hutu exiles who had organized the [1994 genocide](#) from using the Congo as a base of operations, in doing so overthrowing President Mobutu. Many Tutsi and Banyamulenge joined Rwanda to seek protection from [persecution](#), reinforcing the idea they were “invaders.” There is still strong [anti-Rwandophone sentiment](#) in the D.R.C., despite the 2004 nationality law being worded to include most Rwandophones.

This year, the mainly Tutsi M23 rebel group [resurged](#), displacing tens of thousands, after being defeated by Congolese forces and United Nations (U.N.) peacekeepers (MONUSCO) in 2013. It had [partly returned](#) from 2016, resurfacing in 2021. M23 emerged due to Tutsi [insecurities](#) and [marginalization](#) and previously had Rwandan support. Rwanda denies [backing M23 again](#). Hostilities have increased against Rwandophones, who are all associated with M23, despite most Banyamulenge and Hutu opposing the insurgency. A Rwandophone lieutenant colonel was [brutalized](#) by civilians and police in Kisangani, and a Banyamulenge herder was lynched and [reportedly cannibalized](#) in Maniema. A recent recording [called on](#) Congolese to kill Tutsi using machetes in South Kivu. The authorities [arrested people](#) for joining Tutsi “[hunts](#)” in the capital, but the threat remains.

In **South Kivu**, the Banyamulenge have been [targeted](#) by self-styled “indigenous” Mai-Mai militias in a separate crisis since 2017, as detailed in [this report](#). A recent paper found a [close link](#) between genocidal hate speech and anti-Banyamulenge attacks. In **Ituri**, the Lendu CODECO militias have [targeted Hema](#) in systematic attacks since 2017. They killed [62 displaced Hema](#) in February, displaying MONUSCO’s [insufficient capacity](#) to protect civilians. The threats to the Hema and also the Luba are detailed in [this report](#). General frustration with MONUSCO has led to [violent protests](#). The civil society group [LUCHA](#) and [populist politicians](#) have said MONUSCO should withdraw if it [continues to fail](#) to protect civilians, yet this would put civilians at more risk.

The Batwa forest people, or “[Pygmies](#),” face persecution due to exclusionary [conservation policies](#). Since 2019, Congolese soldiers and park guards have run abusive [operations](#) to displace Batwa from their homelands in Kahuzi-Biega National Park. This year, the D.R.C. Senate finally passed a law against [anti-Batwa discrimination](#).

There is uncertainty over the prospect of foreign intervention. The East African Community has agreed, but set no date, to [deploy troops](#) in the D.R.C. Uganda already [intervened](#) recently to fight the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an [Islamist](#) terrorist group that often commits [massacres](#). Last year, the United States (U.S.) offered to help the D.R.C. combat the ADF and will now seek to [calm tensions](#) between the D.R.C and Rwanda.

The D.R.C. is at **Stage 8: Persecution** and **Stage 9: Extermination**. **Genocide Watch recommends that:**

- Neighboring countries (such as Rwanda) refrain from taking actions that could escalate the situation.
- MONUSCO prepare for increased targeted violence and increase its intelligence gathering capabilities, preparing to rapidly redeploy its forces to all conflict hotspots and use force to protect all civilians.
- The U.N. Security Council authorize an increased number of soldiers and augmented assets (such as helicopters) for MONUSCO and reconsider upcoming plans to draw down MONUSCO forces.
- The U.S. and other donor states increase and ensure the safe delivery of humanitarian aid in the D.R.C.