

Tense situation in Democratic Republic of Congo

Political unrest is rising in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in protest against the alleged inaction of the security forces towards the massacres in the eastern region and against the possible postponement of November 2016 elections.

Massacres in eastern Congo

The military [defeat of the M23 rebel group](#) in 2013 had raised hopes that the security of [DRC's eastern region](#) would improve, but [dozens of armed groups](#) are still active, mainly in Nord-Kivu. Violence, rooted in ethnic divisions, is fed by [regional rivalries](#) and [conflict mineral trade](#). In recent months, [FDLR](#), a Rwandan Hutu group involved in Rwanda's 1994 genocide, the [ADF-NALU](#), a Ugandan Islamist group, and other armed militia have committed gross [human rights violations](#), including [massacres of civilians](#) and [abduction of aid workers](#). According to civil society organisations [more than 1 000 people](#) have been killed in Nord-Kivu since October 2014. On that same territory, there are 1.6 million vulnerable persons, including 780 000 displaced persons (IDPs), most of them children and women. Aid agencies have raised the [alarm](#) that continued violence will further worsen the number of victims since abductions, difficulties in access and [forced closures of camps](#) have delayed or suspended [humanitarian operations](#). The UN stabilisation mission ([Monusco](#)) with a staff of 22 000, has not been able to totally eradicate violence after [17 years](#) of presence. This failure is partly due to [strained cooperation with the DRC army](#), [suspected](#) of participating in abuse. After [repeated massacres in Beni](#), public protests against Monusco and the government forces have occurred in [Butembo](#), [Goma](#), and on social media.



Source:
[OpenStreetMap Contributors](#).

Political situation

[Protests](#) are also directed against the possible postponement of general and presidential elections. Elections are due for November 2016 but the national electoral commission considers they should be organised [at a later date](#), to allow revision of the 2011 electoral register. The Constitutional Court decided that President Joseph Kabila shall [remain in office](#) until the presidential election can be organised. This decision is [challenged](#) by the opposition which denounces a manoeuvre to extend President Kabila's tenure beyond the constitutional limit – his second and last mandate ends by December 2016. On 4 June, the secretary-general of the ruling party suggested a [referendum](#) could be organised on the extension of the presidential term limit, an option that was [ruled out](#) by opposition leaders. Possible opposition presidential candidates are being put under pressure: [Moise Katumbi](#) was charged with recruiting mercenaries to destabilise the country, while [Martin Fayulu](#)'s hotel has been closed down by the government, which accuses him of not having paid taxes.

[The EU](#) is one of the main providers of [humanitarian assistance](#) to DRC. [Development cooperation](#) programmes focus on infrastructure and [better governance](#). Several CSDP missions have operated in the field; currently [EUSEC RD Congo](#) provides support for security sector reform. The EU, the African Union, the United Nations, and La Francophonie (OIF) underline the need for a dialogue between the government and opposition, and [committed](#) to supporting this. On 23 May the Council of the EU [condemned](#) violence in eastern Congo and [called](#) on DRC to respect the constitutional provisions for holding the elections. In [several resolutions](#) the **European Parliament** has expressed concern over human rights abuses. In [March 2016](#), Parliament condemned the restrictions against freedom of expression and called for EU sanctions on those responsible for violence in eastern Congo.

