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COUNTRY UPDATE: 6 February 2025

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Democratic Republic of Congo

1. Burundi enters the fray

Burundi President Evariste Ndayishimiye has called on the international community to rein in Rwanda, which he accuses of "annexing parts of its neighbouring countries." Addressing the diplomatic corps in Bujumbura on Saturday, President Ndayishimiye referred to DRC's city of Goma which was last week was captured by M23 rebels backed by Rwanda. "If Rwanda has decided to start annexing some parts of its neighbours, a time will come and they also attack Burundi. They are training and arming young Burundian refugees and sending them to fight in DRC, they will also send them to Burundi, but we shall not allow that," the President said. Burundi's President accuses Kagame of 'expansionist' agenda | Monitor

By Monday reports were emerging that Burundi soldiers were supporting the DRC Army in halting the M23 advance on Bukavu. Locals reported that the rebels have been driven out of several villages between Goma and Bukavu, however, this information has not been confirmed by either the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo or the M23.

Burundi came to the rescue of the Congolese army, after Burundian President Evariste Ndayishimiye said that the conflict with the M23 could degenerate into a regional conflict. "If there is no peace in the east of the DRC, there is no peace in the region," said the Burundian head of state, who also asked for more commitment from the international community in mediating this conflict.

At least 700 people have been killed since Sunday, when the M23 seized the city of Goma, and there are 2,800 wounded, mostly civilians, due to fighting between DRC forces and rebels, according to the UN. Congolese forces, with help from Burundi, halt M23 advance in South Kivu

2. SADC summit announces 'unwavering' support for DR Congo

Southern African leaders gave "unwavering" backing Friday to the Democratic Republic of Congo, after the Rwanda-backed M23 group captured the biggest city in its mineral-rich east. The southern African grouping SADC held crisis talks in Zimbabwe on the escalating conflict in the eastern DR Congo which has raised concerns for regional security.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) summit “reaffirmed its solidarity and unwavering commitment to continue supporting the DRC in its pursuit of safeguarding its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity,” according to the final statement.

The crisis talks were convened after 16 soldiers from South Africa and Malawi, also SADC members, were killed in fighting in recent days around the regional capital of Goma, where they were deployed as part of regional peacekeeping efforts. The summit said that the objectives of the peacekeeping mission deployed in December 2023 “have not yet been realised,” the statement said. It called for the immediate dispatch of defence officials from countries with troops in the peacekeeping force to review the troops on site. Besides South Africa and Malawi, Tanzania also has soldiers in the force. The statement also backed calls for a joint summit of SADC and the East African Community grouping “to deliberate on the way forward regarding the security situation in the DRC”.
SADC summit announces ‘unwavering’ support for DR Congo | Club of Mozambique

3. Tense calm, fears for the future in DRC’s Goma a week after M23 takeover

A tense calm prevailed over Goma a week after the occupation by M23, with many trying to flee the city due to lack of everything. The United Nations, aid bodies and rights groups say the recent escalation of fighting has interrupted the essential work of humanitarian agencies in the DRC. The destruction of sites for internally displaced persons also forced many to return to their places of origin, with at least 100,000 IDPs having left Goma in the last week. Some camps are now emptied of people, witnesses said. Many of those now returning home from Goma were forced to flee their towns and villages amid escalating fighting. Some feared being caught in the crossfire; others feared the abuses committed by the rebels, the army and its allied Wazalendo militia. Some residents said they witnessed looting, rapes and shootings.

It was late on Sunday, January 26, 2025, under the cover of darkness when M23 fighters made their way into Goma, after intense fighting that had pitted them against the Congolese army and its allies. Amateur

videos circulating online showed columns of men in military garb not usually seen in the region walking in parts of the city. M23 issued a communique announcing the "liberation" of the town.

Despite some resistance from the Congolese army and allied Wazelendo militias, by Thursday, Goma was under M23 control, with the rebels advancing southwards in the direction of Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu, and promising to march all the way to DRC's capital, Kinshasa. Since M23 claimed Goma on January 26, more than 700 people have been killed and nearly 3,000 have been wounded, according to officials. The city became a "veritable centre" of human despair last week, according to some of its inhabitants.

As the fighting raged, the internet was cut off, and so were electricity and water supplies. Shops and businesses were also shut. On Tuesday and Wednesday, some residents took to looting – many out of desperation. A warehouse of the UN's World Food Programme (WFP), located some 2km from downtown Goma, was ransacked and all food and non-food items were taken.

The city's bishop, Willy Ngumbi, on Wednesday deplored damage to a maternity ward from explosives and called on Rwanda, Congo and Burundi – which also has troops in the region aiding Congo – to hold talks to prevent an escalation of the conflict.

A week after Goma's capture, with M23 now fully in charge, electricity and internet connections, which had been cut off for days, returned to most of the city. Many shops also reopened in the city centre. Food products were on the shelves, but the prices of some items had doubled or even tripled.

Although the Congolese army and its allies lost control of the city, and a tense calm now surrounds it, not all of Goma's inhabitants are worried. They seem to fall into three main camps. Some said that they feel relieved because there is now less military presence and a less militarised feel in the city that has been on tenterhooks for months as the rebels advanced and displaced people from other parts streamed into the city.

Other residents have simply decided to accept what happened, feeling that they cannot change their situation so they may as well work within the system being governed by the new occupiers of the city. However, the third group is more afraid – fearing that as national authorities in Kinshasa promise a counteroffensive to retake Goma once again, a new assault will only result in more casualties.

The Congolese government has vowed to retake control of Goma, but experts and locals worry that the city's awkward location – in close proximity to an active volcano, on the shores of Lake Kivu, and beside the Rwandan border – will make it difficult to reclaim militarily. Tense calm, fears for the future in DRC's Goma a week after M23 takeover | Conflict News | Al Jazeera

At the beginning of the week M23 declared a unilateral ceasefire. However, on 6 February it was reported that they had seized control of a mining town in South Kivu province, in an apparent violation of the ceasefire. The capture of Nyabibwe on Lake Kivu takes the rebels a step closer to the provincial capital Bukavu.

Nyabibwe, where mines produce gold, coltan and other metals, is a commercial hub more than halfway between Goma, the capital of North Kivu province that the rebels took last week, and Bukavu.
Despite ongoing fighting, Malawi on Wednesday cited the ceasefire in its order for its troops to withdraw from the force.
Ceasefire in east Congo appears to crumble as rebels take another town | Club of Mozambique

Mozambique

1. Insurgents kill, kidnap children in Cabo Delgado

One dead and at least seven children kidnapped is the result of the latest attack attributed to insurgents in the district of Mocímboa da Praia, Cabo Delgado. The attack occurred on Thursday in the village of Mumu, more than 30 kilometres from the Mocímboa da Praia district headquarters. Mozambique: Insurgents kill, kidnap children in Cabo Delgado | Club of Mozambique

2. Mozambique: Rwanda deploys new contingent to Cabo Delgado

The Rwanda Security Forces (RSF) are to deploy a new contingent to support the fight against rebels groups in Cabo Delgado, in northern Mozambique, according to the Rwandan authorities. According to information from the Rwandan Ministry of Defence, Major General Wilson Gumisiriza, commander of the Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF) Mechanised Infantry Division, on Thursday "briefed the Rwanda Security Forces (RSF) contingent ahead of their deployment to Cabo Delgado Province, Mozambique".

This deployment coincides with reports of several incursions by insurgents in Cabo Delgado, with deaths reported, but also of children kidnapped in the district of Mocímboa da Praia. In November, the Council of the European Union (EU) approved an additional €20 million in support for Rwandan forces in the fight against terrorism in Cabo Delgado, considering that this deployment “has been crucial”. The measure, a “complement” to existing assistance under the European Peace Facility, aims to “continue supporting the deployment of the Rwandan Defence Force in the Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado”, a statement from the structure that brings together EU Member States indicated at the time.
[Mozambique: Rwanda deploys new contingent to Cabo Delgado | Club of Mozambique]

3. EU presents final report on elections

The EU presented its final report on the Mozambican elections in Maputo on Thursday 30 January. Steering clear of the flagrant rigging that was observed throughout the process, the EU preferred to blame “legislative changes” that “contributed to legal uncertainty of an already incoherent and dispersed legal framework”.

According to the 97-page document, the changes created legal uncertainties in provisions regarding the size of the slot in the ballot boxes, the jurisdiction of district courts to annul elections and the elimination of the requirement for a prior challenge to file an electoral challenge.

The Report highlights the fact that the changes were introduced "when the electoral process was already well advanced, just 47 days before the vote", a fact that "affected its institutionalization and introduced legal uncertainty, which may indicate more political calculation than a genuine desire to improve the electoral framework".

The EU EOM also underlines the fact that the revision of the electoral legislation has eliminated the principle of prior challenge (the complaint made by the candidacy delegates to the Polling Station), which has caused divergent interpretations as to the validity of this requirement by the district courts, resulting "in contradictory decisions during the electoral process". The Mission adds: "the lack of legal clarity was aggravated by an error in the publication of the new electoral laws, which did not mention the elimination of this principle. The rectification of the error, published in the Official Gazette on 13 September, less than a month before election day, did not help to reassure the parties and prevented the stakeholders, especially the political parties, from being properly informed.

The European Union Election Observation Mission also found that, in addition to the legislative changes, there are still several gaps in the legal framework, including the lack of clarification of the hierarchy of subordination between the central and lower levels of the electoral management bodies, the absence of a transparency measure such as the publication by the CNE of the results by polling station and the lack of harmonisation between the deadlines for deciding on appeals to the CC and the deadline for the CNE to announce the election results.

In general, the Report argues that the counting and tabulation of the electoral results of the general and provincial elections of October 9 "were marked by anomalies and serious errors" and that "the extreme lack of transparency negatively affected public confidence in the results of the process". General Elections: Legislative changes contributed to legal uncertainty of an already incoherent and dispersed legal framework - EU EOM

4. Death squads resurface in the country

Since the announcement of the election results by the National Elections Commission (CNE), there was a resurgence of the death squads, whose mission is to "kill in the name of defending the bosses". The escalation of the death squads began on the night of October 18, 2024, when lawyer Elvino Dias and the president of the Podemos party, Paulo Guambe, were shot with 25 bullets, their bodies abandoned on Avenue Joaquim Chissano. Since then, the murders haven't stopped, although they have been little publicized.

Since 21 October 2024 the Decide Electoral Platform counted 315 deaths across the country, 91% of which were caused by live bullet shots, perpetrated by hooded police officers. In this wave of murders, the members of the Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR) are pointed out by the victims as the main perpetrators, who almost always resort to a white car with hooded faces.

The PODEMOS party has already denounced the persecution of Venâncio Mondlane's supporters and sympathizers in the context of the post-election crisis, reporting more than 100 murders. According to the secretary general of PODEMOS, Sebastião Mussanhane, the murders target selected people. Some people are shot at work, others inside their homes. Some are kidnapped first, before being executed.

The return of the death squads can be seen as a way to intimidate Mozambique's second most voted party, as has happened in the past with members and sympathizers of the RENAMO party. However, not only known political activists are targeted. In a reign of terror by the Police, ordinary young people are targeted, without reason. An example: in Machava Socimol, in the early hours of January 15, Stephen Diogo Sitoe, Abubacar Ibraimo Massual and Nomene Tamare (aged between 16 and 18) were murdered by Police. The three were returning from an entertainment establishment in the neighborhood, when, around 03:00 am, they were questioned by police officers who, without any justification, opened fire indiscriminately, firing at least 32 shots at the victims.

An anonymous source who works in the morgue of Maputo Central Hospital revealed that, since October last year, police officers have been stationed in the morgue in search of bodies of people who lost their lives as victims of gunfire. During the night they collect the bodies and dispose of them in mass graves. "I understand that the police do this to erase the trail of the murders they have been committing day after

day and, especially, in the dead of night. They are always on the lookout, and when a body of someone who has been shot turns up, they remove it immediately. One of the ways we have found to help some families who lose their loved ones to gunfire is to guide them to immediately remove the bodies from the morgue, even if they have to take them home or have a burial that is not dignified," he said.
https://www.cartamz.com/index.php/politica/item/18631-tensao-pos-eleitoral-esquadroes-de-morte-ressurgem-no-pais?tmpl=component&print=1