

RESEARCHED AND COMPILED BY THE REFUGEE DOCUMENTATION CENTRE OF IRELAND ON 28 JANUARY 2025

DISCLAIMER

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. All COI Query Responses are compiled in line with the Common EU Guidelines (2008) and the EUAA Methodology (2023). This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. Please refer to all documents cited.

COI QUERY RESPONSE

DRC – M23

In January 2025 *Agence France Presse* states that: “There were conflicting accounts over how much of Goma remained under Congolese control after the M23 armed group and Rwandan soldiers entered the city centre on Sunday night. The M23 resurfaced in late 2021 after years of dormancy and began seizing large swathes of North Kivu province. But fighting with the Congolese military has intensified since early this year, in the latest chapter of the internal and cross-border violence which has dogged the eastern DRC for three decades. Besides the more than a million who call Goma home, the provincial capital is host to nearly as many displaced by fighting. The fighting has intensified a humanitarian crisis, displacing half a million people this month alone...”¹

The *International Crisis Group* in January 2024 notes that: “Rwanda and the M23 now control practically all of North Kivu province and by force of arms have forged a new reality in the region.”²

The *New York Times* in January 2025 states that: “The M23 militia, funded and directed by Rwanda, said it had seized the city of Goma, terrifying its people, many of whom sought shelter there after fleeing the rebel advance. A rebel militia backed by Rwanda on Monday announced the capture of the city of Goma in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, a major victory for the group and one of the most significant escalations in the conflict between the two countries in years. The militia, known as M23, briefly occupied Goma once before, in 2012, then was defeated and lay dormant for almost a decade. Now it has come roaring back, aiming to occupy the region for the long term and exploit its valuable rare minerals, with the backing of several thousand Rwandan troops who are in Congo, according to United Nations experts. This time, M23 appears to be in a stronger position to keep hold of Goma, a city made up mainly of people who left their homes in terror and will now have to live under the rule of one of the armed groups they fled.”³

¹ Agence France Presse (28 January 2025) UN says food assistance halted around DRC's war-torn Goma

² International Crisis Group (28 January 2025) Fall of DRC's Goma: Urgent Action Needed to Avert a Regional War, p.1

³ New York Times (28 January 2025) Rwandan-Backed Militia Says It Seized City in Eastern Congo, Deepening a Conflict, p.1

Agence France Presse in January 2025 states that: “The M23, or March 23 Movement, briefly occupied Goma at the end of 2012 and was defeated by DRC forces and the UN the following year. The group re-emerged in late 2021 and started seizing large swathes of North Kivu province.”⁴

In January 2025 the *Protection Cluster/UNHCR* notes that: “Since the renewed M23 offensives near Goma on 23 January 2025, the conflict in eastern DRC has reached alarming levels of violence and forced displacement. Over the past week, the M23 armed group has seized critical areas and cities in South and North Kivu, including Minova, Sake, Masisi and the fighting is now within the city of Goma, the regional capital.”⁵

The *Guardian* in January 2025 points out that: “M23, or the March 23 Movement, is one of more than 100 armed groups fighting Congolese forces in the mineral-rich eastern DRC. It is present in North Kivu province in areas bordering Rwanda and Uganda and has more than 8,000 fighters, according to the UN.”⁶

This document also states that: “This month, the rebel group has made further territorial gains, capturing the towns of Katale, Masisi, Minova and Sake, and now the city of Goma.”⁷

BBC News in January 2025 states that: “The mineral-rich east of the Democratic Republic of Congo has been dogged by conflict for more than 30 years, since the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Numerous armed groups have competed with the central authorities for power and control of the potential fortune in this vast nation.”⁸

This document also states that: “After a rapid advance in the region, fighters from the M23 rebel group have entered Goma – a major city of more than a million people in the east of DR Congo.”⁹

The *Associated Press* in January 2025 states that: “Rwanda-backed rebels claimed they captured eastern Congo’s largest city, Goma, early Monday, as the United Nations described a mass panic among its 2 million people and Congo’s government said the rebel advance was a “declaration of war.”¹⁰

This document also states that: “The M23 has made significant territorial gains along Congo’s border with Rwanda in recent weeks, after months of regional attempts to make peace failed.”¹¹

Amnesty International in January 2025 states that: “On 27 January, the M23 declared that it had seized control of Goma, the DRC’s third-largest city, provincial capital of North-Kivu and home to nearly two million people...Reports from the city described ongoing gunfire and explosions, alongside unverified reports on social media and by journalists of looting, indiscriminate shooting, and shelling in the city.”¹²

⁴ Agence France Presse (28 January 2025) Gunshots in DR Congo's Goma ahead of new UN meeting

⁵ Protection Cluster/UNHCR (28 January 2025) Protection Alert: Intensifying Crisis in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo

⁶ Guardian (27 January 2025) Who are the M23 rebels and why is there fighting in eastern DRC?

⁷ ibid

⁸ BBC News (27 January 2025) What's the fighting in DR Congo all about?, p.1

⁹ ibid, p.1

¹⁰ Associated Press (27 January 2025) Rwanda-backed M23 rebels claim major Congolese city, which Congo calls a ‘declaration of war’, p.1

¹¹ ibid

¹² Amnesty International (27 January 2025) DRC: Warring parties must prioritize civilian protection and humanitarian access in Goma, p.1

This report also notes that: “On 18 January, the M23, backed by Rwandan forces, launched a military operation to expand its territory, violating a ceasefire agreement between Rwanda and the DRC established through the Luanda Peace Process. On 21 January, the M23 claimed to have captured several cities, including the strategically important supply city of Minova in South Kivu province, located about 20 kilometres from Goma across Lake Kivu.”¹³

Business Monitor in January 2025 states that: “On January 27, Rwanda-backed M23 rebels captured the strategically important city of Goma in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), following a recent advance that displaced over 400,000 Congolese civilians in the space of less than a month.”¹⁴

A report issued in January 2025 by the *Global Conflict Tracker* points out that: “In the aftermath of flawed, violent national elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC; the Congo) in December 2023, severe clashes between the military and insurgents— most prominently, M23 and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)—continue in eastern DRC. M23 is a primarily ethnically Tutsi rebel group with ties to the Rwandan and Ugandan governments, while ADF is an ISIS-affiliated militia group.”¹⁵

In December 2024 the *Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect* states that: “M23 has reportedly perpetrated likely war crimes...”¹⁶

References

Agence France Presse (28 January 2025) *UN says food assistance halted around DRC's war-torn Goma*

<https://advance.lexis.com/r/delivery/content/1742454764/download/243811107/FullDoc/false>

This is a subscription database

Accessed Tuesday 28 January 2025

Agence France Presse (28 January 2025) *Gunshots in DR Congo's Goma ahead of new UN meeting*

<https://advance.lexis.com/r/delivery/content/1742456752/download/243811226/FullDoc/false>

This is a subscription database

Accessed Tuesday 28 January 2025

Amnesty International (27 January 2025) *DRC: Warring parties must prioritize civilian protection and humanitarian access in Goma*

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/01/drc-warring-parties-must-prioritize-civilian-protection-and-humanitarian-access-in-goma/>

Accessed Tuesday 28 January 2025

Associated Press (27 January 2025) *Rwanda-backed M23 rebels claim major Congolese city, which Congo calls a 'declaration of war'*

<https://apnews.com/article/congo-rwanda-m23-rebels-peacekeepers-cb80a43e102737dbf0ed2fc78a188d9>

¹³ *ibid*, p.2

¹⁴ *Business Monitor* (27 January 2025) Quick View: DRC & Rwanda On The Brink Of War As M23 Rebels Take Key City

¹⁵ *Global Conflict Tracker* (27 January 2025) *Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo*, p.1

¹⁶ *Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect* (1 December 2024) *Democratic Republic of the Congo*, p.2

Accessed Tuesday 28 January 2025

BBC News (27 January 2025) *What's the fighting in DR Congo all about?*

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgly1yrd9j3o>

Accessed Tuesday 28 January 2025

Business Monitor (27 January 2025) *Quick View: DRC & Rwanda On The Brink Of War As M23 Rebels Take Key*

City

<https://advance.lexis.com/r/delivery/content/1742452317/download/243810949/FullDoc/false>

This is a subscription database

Accessed Tuesday 28 January 2025

Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (1 December 2024) *Democratic Republic of the Congo*

<https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/>

Accessed Tuesday 28 January 2025

Guardian (27 January 2025) *Who are the M23 rebels and why is there fighting in eastern DRC?*

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jan/27/who-are-m23-rebels-fighting-in-eastern-drc-congo>

Accessed Tuesday 28 January 2025

Global Conflict Tracker (27 January 2025) *Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo*

<https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-democratic-republic-congo>

Accessed Tuesday 28 January 2025

International Crisis Group (28 January 2025) *Fall of DRC's Goma: Urgent Action Needed to Avert a Regional War*

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/great-lakes/democratic-republic-congo/fall-dr-cs-goma-urgent-action-needed-avert-regional-war>

Accessed Tuesday 28 January 2025

New York Times (28 January 2025) *Rwandan-Backed Militia Says It Seized City in Eastern Congo, Deepening a Conflict*

<https://advance.lexis.com/r/delivery/content/1742648381/download/243829696/FullDoc/false>

This is a subscription database

Accessed Tuesday 28 January 2025

Protection Cluster/UNHCR (28 January 2025) *Protection Alert: Intensifying Crisis in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo*

https://reliefweb.int/attachments/e49ca4cc-111d-483f-9d5c-11b466993b20/gpc_protection_alert_dr_congo_27_jan_2025_final.pdf

Accessed Tuesday 28 January 2025

Sources Consulted

Amnesty International

BBC News

Electronic Immigration Network

EUAA

European Country of Origin Information Network

Freedom House
Google
Human Rights Watch
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
International Crisis Group
Lexis Nexis
Minority Rights Group International
New Humanitarian
Online Newspapers
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
Reliefweb
United Kingdom Home Office
UNDP
UNHCR Refworld
UN Treaty Body Database
United States Department of State
World Bank

Contact Information

Refugee Documentation Centre
Legal Aid Board
48/49 North Brunswick Street
Dublin 7
Ireland

Email: research@legalaidboard.ie