



## **DRC Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Wednesday 20 November 2019**

### **Information on the political~security situation from June – November 2019**

In November 2019 the *Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect* points out that:

“Attacks by armed groups operating in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), as well as recurring inter-communal violence in various parts of the country, threaten the lives of vulnerable populations. Despite military offensives conducted by the government's armed forces (FARDC) with assistance from the UN Peacekeeping Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and its Force Intervention Brigade, attacks by armed groups and inter-communal violence continue. According to UN Refugee Agency, over 4.8 million Congolese are internally displaced while more than 886,000 refugees have fled to neighboring countries. Several provinces in eastern DRC – notably North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri and Tanganyika – as well as the Kasai region, have been plagued by recent inter-communal violence and attacks by armed groups” (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (15 November 2019) *Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)*, p.1).

A report issued in November 2019 by *Human Rights Watch* states that:

“Despite concerns about the fairness of the 2018 election, in which Felix Tshisekedi was declared president, the new administration has taken some steps that signaled it could have a more constructive approach to human rights issues. But these early steps have fallen far short of changes needed to end Congo's cycles of violence and impunity” (Human Rights Watch (13 November 2019) *EU Should Extend Sanctions Against Congo Rights Abusers*).

In November 2019 *Voice of America* states that:

“The U.N. refugee agency reports hundreds of thousands of displaced people in the Democratic Republic of Congo's North Kivu and Ituri provinces are living in abject poverty and subject to mass human rights violations. A wave of brutal attacks by armed groups in North Kivu and Ituri provinces in June triggered the flight of some 300,000 people, mainly women and children from their homes. The U.N. refugee agency says these forcibly displaced people are living in dire conditions with host communities” (Voice of America (12 November 2019) *UNHCR: Eastern DRC's Forcibly Displaced Victims of Human Rights Violations*).

A publication issued in November 2019 by the *Agence France Presse* points out that:

“The impoverished central African country has been wracked by conflict near its eastern border, with many of the militias having evolved from the two Congo wars (1996-1997 and 1998-2003). The Islamist-rooted ADF, which arose in western Uganda in 1995, has targeted Beni, killing hundreds of civilians over the last five years. But there are also home-grown militia and other armed groups -- some 130 roam the North and South Kivu provinces of DR Congo, a vast country the size of

western continental Europe” (Agence France Presse (6 November 2019) *UN mulls slow DR Congo drawdown despite ongoing bloodshed*

Voice of America in October 2019 states that:

“Months of unrelenting militia attacks in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo are driving more people from their homes, adding to the millions already displaced and threatening to spread insecurity elsewhere in Africa's Great Lakes region, observers warn” (Voice of America (29 October 2019) *DRC Unrest Sparks Concerns of Regional Refugee Crisis*).

The *New Humanitarian* in October 2019 notes that:

“More than 200,000 people have fled fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo's South Kivu highlands in recent months as a long-simmering struggle over land, power, and citizenship descends into village burnings and widespread killings” (New Humanitarian (28 October 2019) *In eastern Congo, a local conflict flares as regional tensions rise*, p.1).

In October 2019 the *United Nations Security Council* states that:

“During the period under review, the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained fragile, as illegal armed groups continued to commit atrocities against the civilian population and attack the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC)” (United Nations Security Council (1 October 2019) *Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region*, p.1).

In September 2019 the *United Nations Security Council* points out that:

“The political situation during the reporting period was dominated by the inauguration of a coalition government under the Prime Minister, Sylvestre Ilunga Ilunkamba, in September. The President, Félix Tshisekedi, also continued to play an active role in regional initiatives to strengthen bilateral relations and increase cooperation on security and economic issues” (United Nations Security Council (27 September 2019) *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, p.1).

This document also states that:

“Intercommunal violence and armed group activity continued to claim the lives of numerous civilians, with an upsurge in incidents in some areas in the east of the country. Despite political commitments to address the causes of insecurity in Ituri Province, Djugu and Mahagi territories saw an increase in violence. Attacks on civilians also increased in the Grand Nord area of North Kivu Province, due to a resurgence of attacks by presumed members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Also in North Kivu, Masisi territory continued to be negatively affected by extensive armed group clashes, causing dozens of civilian deaths. Insecurity also persisted in Maniema, South Kivu and Tanganyika Provinces, but did not increase significantly” (ibid, p.4).

In September 2019 *Human Rights Watch* states that:

“In recent months, some human rights progress has been made in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but there is still a lot of work to be done. We have seen a decline in political repression, as most political prisoners and activists detained solely for exercising their fundamental rights are now free, while many activists and politicians who were in exile have been allowed to return” (Human Rights Watch (24 September 2019) *UN Rights Body Should Encourage DR Congo to Combat Impunity*).

This report also states that:

“Peaceful demonstrators continue to be arbitrarily arrested or roughed up by security forces” (ibid).

A report published in September 2019 by the *World Alliance for Citizen Participation* points out that:

“Under the former administration, protests were systematically banned, protesters arbitrarily arrested and often met with excessive force by security personnel, leading to hundreds of deaths. Although protests are no longer systematically banned, excessive use of force, including the use of live ammunition, is still a recurrent issue. One person was killed during opposition protests in Kinshasa and Goma on 30 June 2019” (World Alliance for Citizen Participation (18 September 2019) *DRC: 500 political prisoners released under new administration but concerns persist*).

A paper issued in September 2019 by the *UNHCR* notes that:

“As the situation in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri and adjacent areas remains fluid, UNHCR considers that persons fleeing the conflict in these three provinces and adjacent areas are likely to be in need of international refugee protection in accordance with Article 1(2) of the 1969 OAU Convention...In addition, many persons fleeing the DRC are likely to meet the 1951 Convention criteria for refugee status...” (UNHCR (September 2019) *UNHCR Position On Returns To North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, And Adjacent Areas In The Democratic Republic Of Congo Affected By Ongoing Conflict And Violence – Update II*, p.10).

In August 2019 *Reuters* states that:

“Since being inaugurated in January, Tshisekedi has signaled a break with his predecessor in some areas. He pardoned three prominent political prisoners and 700 regular prisoners in March, a marked shift away from the policies of Kabila, who had scores of his opponents jailed” (Reuters (26 August 2019) *New Congo government shows influence of former president*).

In August 2019 the *UNCHR* states in a report that:

“Two months on since violence forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's eastern province of Ituri, severe underfunding and growing insecurity mean rising numbers are in need of humanitarian assistance and are unable to return home” (UNHCR (16 August 2019) *Two months on, fear and squalor prevail in DRC's Ituri Province*).

In August 2019 the *Congo Research Group* states that:

“Conflict continues to affect the lives of millions in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. According to a variety of humanitarian measures, overall conditions in the country have not improved much in recent years...Last year, 1.8 million people were newly displaced by violence, more than anywhere else in the world except Ethiopia, and an estimated 12.8 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection in 2019...” (Congo Research Group (14 August 2019) *Congo, Forgotten, The Numbers Behind Africa’s Longest Humanitarian Crisis*, p.3).

In August 2019 the *United Nations Human Rights Council* states that:

“The electoral process unfolded in a context of restrictions on democratic space marked by numerous violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In particular, the Congolese defence forces and security services used excessive force to disperse political rallies and peaceful demonstrations during the election campaign and following the announcement of the results, causing deaths and injuries” (United Nations Human Rights Council (14 August 2019) *Human rights situation and the activities of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, p.3).

In July 2019 the *Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project* states in a report that:

“Violence has grown and spread throughout the first six months of Tshisekedi's presidency...” (Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (25 July 2019) *Fact Sheet: Conflict in the DRC*, p.1).

A publication issued in July 2019 by the *United Nations Security Council* points out that:

“Although the overall security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was relatively stable, some worrying dynamics emerged. Despite tensions in Mai-Ndombe and Sankuru provinces, no significant violence took place and the situation in the western provinces was generally stable. The trend of surrenders by members of armed groups continued, notably in Tanganyika. In North Kivu, the security situation deteriorated markedly in Masisi territory, and there was a spike in attacks on Ebola response centres in Beni and Butembo. Shifting security dynamics were observed in Maniema Province, and there were worrying trends in Fizi and Kalehe territories (South Kivu Province) and in Djugu and Mahagi territories (Ituri Province)” (United Nations Security Council (17 July 2019) *United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, p.5).

This document also states that:

“Following the peaceful transition of power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 24 January 2019, national and provincial legislative and executive institutions were installed in accordance with the Constitution. The return of opposition leaders to the Democratic Republic of the Congo contributed to evolving dynamics in the emerging balance of power among the country’s political forces. The President, Félix Tshisekedi, pursued his initiatives aimed at strengthening bilateral and regional cooperation, implementing the national emergency programme, opening the political space and improving the security situation in the country” (ibid, p.1).

*Human Rights Watch* in July 2019 states that:

“Police in the Democratic Republic of Congo fired live ammunition, killing one person, in dispersing opposition protests on June 30, 2019. They also used teargas, beatings, and arbitrary arrests against protesters in Kinshasa, the capital, and the eastern city of Goma” (Human Rights Watch (4 July 2019) *DR Congo: Police Fire on, Beat Protesters*, p.1).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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