

**DR Congo: UN urged to protect civilians in North Kivu** Amnesty International 11 July 2012

The UN Security Council must call on the Rwandan government to stop providing support for the M23 armed group in DR Congo's North Kivu province, Amnesty International said as the UN redeployed peacekeepers to the main eastern city of Goma.

The M23 have driven back the Congolese government army in a determined offensive over the last few days. The UN and authorities in eastern DR Congo say Rwanda has backed the non-state armed group, M23, a claim denied by Kigali. (...)

Amnesty International has received reports from numerous sources that M23 is using heavy artillery and continue to forcibly recruit civilians. According to credible sources, two civilians were killed by the M23 in Bunagana on Sunday when they refused to join the group, while two other civilians were killed during the fighting.

Although Rwanda appears to have breached a UN arms embargo, the UN Security Council has done nothing to put pressure on the country to end its support for the M23, which has recently been strengthened with heavy artillery and new recruits." (...)

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), has a robust mandate which allows the use of "all necessary means, including deadly force" to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.

Despite this, MONUSCO has been unable to adequately protect civilians and help restore calm to the volatile North Kivu region and has instead focused on providing technical support to the poorly trained Congolese army. (...) "The future of the eastern Congolese people now mainly lies in the hands of the UN Security Council. It's crucial that MONUSCO now uses its mandate to effectively protect civilians." (...)

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