

EASTERN DRC SITUATION

28 February 2025



New arrivals wait at the Gatumba border post between Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. ©UNHCR/Bernard Ntwari

HIGHLIGHTS

- **The situation in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) remains extremely tense and insecure.**
- UNHCR, in collaboration with governments and partners in neighbouring countries, continues to **update interagency contingency plans and maintain a state of readiness to support any new arrivals**. Since the beginning of the year, almost [80,000 people](#) have sought international protection in neighboring countries.
- The head of UN Peace Operations, **Jean-Pierre Lacroix**, [arrived in the DRC](#) capital, Kinshasa, on 27 February, while ICC Prosecutor **Karim Khan** [visited the DRC](#) from 24 to 26 February 2025.
- [EAC and SADC](#) issue a **joint statement** on progress in restoring peace and security in eastern DRC
- **In South Kivu, over 10,000 displaced people have returned from Idjwi Island to Minova and Kalehe due to dire conditions, while in North Kivu, about 80,000 people have returned to Masisi**
- The Government of the DR Congo and humanitarian partners launched the 2025 **Humanitarian Response Plan, seeking \$2.54 billion to assist 11 million people, including 7.8 million IDPs.**

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

- On 27 February, the Government of the DRC and the humanitarian community launched the [2025 Humanitarian Response Plan for DRC](#). **The plan calls for \$2.54 billion to deliver lifesaving assistance to 11 million Congolese, including 7.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).**
- The head of UN Peace Operations, **Jean-Pierre Lacroix**, [arrived in the DRC capital, Kinshasa, on 27 February](#). He met with Prime Minister Judith Suminwa Tuluka and other senior officials. Discussions focused on the security situation in the east and ongoing efforts to achieve an immediate ceasefire in North and South Kivu. Mr. Lacroix advocated for the implementation of [UN Security Council Resolution 2773 \(2025\)](#).
- **ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan visited the DRC from 24 to 26 February 2025**. In a meeting with President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, they discussed the escalating violence and the urgent need for accountability, reiterating their commitment to combating impunity and ensuring justice for victims.
- **EAC and SADC have issued a joint statement on progress in restoring peace and security in eastern DRC**. It highlights ongoing peace efforts and confirms the appointment of Olusegun Obasanjo, Hailemariam Desalegn Boshe, and Uhuru Kenyatta as facilitators of the joint peace process. The statement also announces the EAC-SADC Chiefs of Defence Forces meeting on 24 February to discuss the ceasefire, ahead of a ministerial meeting on 28 February.
- Several explosions were reported during a public rally organized in Bukavu (South Kivu) on 27 February. [Media reports](#) refer to several casualties.
- [OCHA](#) has expressed alarm over escalating violence and insecurity in Uvira, South Kivu, where clashes and rising crime endanger communities and humanitarian workers, with reports of looting and sexual violence. **In South Kivu, over 10,000 displaced people have returned from Idjwi Island to Minova and Kalehe due to dire conditions, while in North Kivu, about 80,000 people have returned to Masisi**, where infrastructure is largely destroyed and humanitarian aid is urgently needed.
- **Despite indications that conditions are not conducive to safe and sustained return, some of the IDPs evicted from IDP sites in Goma continue to return to their areas of origin**, while others are heading towards Goma city or to spontaneously established collective centres. A recent Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) assessment of returnees in Nyiragongo estimated that around 44 per cent of returnee families found their field occupied/ exploited - including by members of armed groups- while 10 per cent of returnee families found their homes occupied by other people.
- On 21 February, **the Rusayo 2 extension site in Goma was completely dismantled, forcing 27,410 people to leave the site, with site infrastructure reportedly looted by the local community**. IDP sites in and around Goma, have now been almost totally emptied. According to analysis from the CCCM cluster, co-led by UNHCR and IOM, there are currently only 1,781 individuals residing in IDP sites in and around Goma, of more than 700,000 people who lived in these sites as of the end of November 2024.
- **According to the [Tanganyika provincial health cluster](#), January witnessed a 359 per cent increase in cholera cases from December, with almost 4,000 cases recorded over the course of the month**. The risk of spread has been exacerbated by high levels of internal displacement within the province, often leading people to concentrate in densely populated spontaneous IDP sites. Humanitarian access constraints, insecurity and reduced health service coverage have all compounded the situation.
- **UNICEF have expressed deep concern at the drastic increase in [grave violations](#) against children recorded in eastern DRC since the escalation of hostilities in late**

January. The number of grave violations recorded by UNICEF and partners has tripled over this period. This includes a two-and-a-half-fold increase in sexual violence against children, a sixfold increase in abductions, a sevenfold increase in killing and maiming and a twelvefold increase in attacks on schools or hospitals.

- According to [WFP](#), the proportion of IDP households in Goma with poor food consumption scores has surged from 13 per cent of households in December 2024 to 71 per cent in February 2024. Over 80 per cent of those interviewed by WFP reported losing their food supplies due to the ongoing conflict, with concerns that IDPs are increasingly resorting to negative and exploitative coping strategies, including survival sex and begging.
- Human rights violations persist in North and South Kivu, with reports of rape at gunpoint in Goma, Uvira, and Bukavu, and forced recruitment of youth and displaced children. According to [UNFPA](#), conflict-related sexual violence is being used as a deliberate tactic of war to terrorize, displace, and control populations, violating the rights and dignity of women and girls.

Regional Updates

- UNHCR, in coordination with governments and partners in countries neighboring DR Congo, is closely monitoring the situation **as the fighting is sustained in both North and South Kivu.**
- Inter-Agency contingency planning continues in case of large-scale displacement from the DRC to neighboring countries.
- The surge of Congolese fleeing to neighbouring countries continued with almost 22,000 new arrivals in the past week, the vast majority to Burundi. The latest figures on new arrivals to neighbouring countries are reflected in the Eastern DRC Displacement Dashboard, which is updated daily and available on the [Operational Data Portal](#).
- The total number of those newly arrived since the beginning of the year in neighboring countries as of 27 February stands at [almost 80,000](#).

Country	Total Arrivals (as of 27 February)	Arrivals in Past 7 Days
Burundi	61,146	18,683
Uganda	16,725	3,016
Zambia	887	59
Rwanda	877	61
Tanzania	181	58
TOTAL	79,816	21,877

Burundi

- As of 27 February, **Burundi has recorded [over 61,000 arrivals](#) since the beginning of this year**, the vast majority of whom have arrived since 14 February. These individuals are arriving through 11 entry points in Cibitoke and Bujumbura Rural Province. The vast majority of arrivals are sheltering in schools and a stadium in Rugombo, while smaller populations are spread across Ciséméré, Gihanga and Makombe Centres, as well as the Kaburantwa site.
- [WFP](#) has urgently appealed for **US\$3 million to provide three months of emergency food assistance to 50,000 new arrivals.** Given current funding shortages and the increase in the refugee population, WFP plans to provide 50 per cent rations to DRC refugees in March, down from 75 per cent in

January. Burundi already faces a severe food security crisis, with 15 per cent of the population facing acute food insecurity and a chronic malnutrition rate of 52.8 per cent- the highest in the world- among children aged between 6 and 59 months.

- Efforts are ongoing by UNHCR and partners to scale up the response to new arrivals. Sectorial responses delivered this week include:
 - **Protection:** On 23 February, UNHCR and Save the Children set up a Protection Desk in Rugombo to identify individuals with specific protection needs, including unaccompanied children, survivors of gender-based violence, the elderly, and those with serious medical conditions. While this has improved identification efforts, limited referral services hinder follow-up care, exacerbated by staffing and funding challenges. To support those on the move, the Burundi Red Cross has deployed volunteers at key entry points, including a team of lifeguards along the Rusizi River to help prevent drownings.
 - **Health:** Volunteer Health Workers, including 484 from the Burundi Red Cross (BRC), have been mobilized in Rugombo and other reception sites to raise awareness on epidemic prevention and provide first aid. Ambulances have been stationed at key locations, with at least 70 vulnerable individuals supported so far.
 - **WASH:** Water is being trucked to reception sites on a daily basis by several partners, including the BRC, who, as of 25 February, had trucked 210,000 litres of water. Several partners have also distributed hygiene kits.
 - **Shelter:** Emergency shelters have also been provided by a number of partners, with efforts to prioritize the most vulnerable. The BRC have erected 100 emergency shelters for 600 people with specific needs, including people with disabilities and female-headed households. Non-Food Items (NFIs), including blankets and sleeping mats, have also been distributed.

Rwanda

- The arrival rate of new asylum seekers in Rwanda remains relatively low, **with 61 Congolese individuals recorded over the past week.** A growing number of Rwandan refugees in eastern DRC and displaced by the conflict are returning to Rwanda. On 24 February, a group of 311 Rwandan returnees (94 households) from Goma were received in Rwanda.

Uganda

- In the past week, **Uganda recorded over 3,000 new arrivals from the DRC,** with a significant surge on 25 February, when 761 people crossed the border. Reports suggest that unofficial exit levies are typically not collected on Tuesdays, which may have contributed to the increase. Additionally, new arrivals told UNHCR that improved transport availability has made travel between Goma and Bunagana easier, possibly influencing the increase in arrivals.

Tanzania

- In the past week, **58 asylum seekers from the DRC arrived in Kigoma, northwestern Tanzania, bringing the total number of new arrivals since the beginning of the year to 172.** Some individuals are not seeking asylum and opt to stay with relatives in Tanzania. UNHCR has provided counselling on asylum procedures, while the Ministry of Home Affairs has advised those not applying for asylum to regularize their stay through the Immigration Department.

Zambia

- As of 26 February, 887 individuals have arrived from the DRC since the beginning of the year, with most coming from North and South Kivu. Mpulungu, on Lake Tanganyika, remains the primary entry point for new arrivals. In response to the evolving situation in the DRC, Zambia is revising its 2025 DRC Contingency Plan.
- On 21 February, UNHCR and the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees (COR) held its second national-level meeting on emergency preparedness and response to the DRC situation. Key action points included assessing transit and reception facilities, reviewing available registration equipment, and updating the roster of trained registration personnel who can be rapidly deployed if needed.
- On 26 February, an interagency coordination meeting was held in Nchelenge, Luapula Province, to discuss preparedness for a potential refugee influx from the DRC. The outcomes of this meeting informed the National Coordination Meeting, co-chaired by the Commissioner for Refugees (COR) and UNHCR, on 28 February. This high-level meeting, held at the Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security Headquarters, brought together key line ministries, UN agencies, and NGOs to enhance collective response planning.

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