



Goma, Kinshasa, Geneva, 7 February 2025

Joint Statement

The signatory organisations are deeply concerned about the human rights violations committed against the civilian population of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), in the context of the conflict between the M23 armed group, supported by Rwandan special forces and the movement Alliance du Fleuve Congo (AFC), and the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC), supported by the local militia called Wazalendo in eastern DRC in the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu. Since the beginning of the offensive led by the M23 and its allies on 26 January 2025 in the city of Goma, at least 3,000 people have been killed and more than 2,880 injured. In Goma, the morgues are overcrowded, and the hospitals have been overwhelmed with an influx of wounded people. At the time of the statement, the M23 and its allies are progressing in the province of South Kivu, where they have taken control part of the territory of Kalehe.

The armed clashes and subsequent occupation of Goma by the M23 and its allies have resulted in the siege of Goma city, blocking the transportation of humanitarian aid and supplies to medical and aid centres for victims. The city faces imminent medicine shortages, the shutdown of stores and food banks, and frequent power and internet disruptions. Additionally, the lack of running water heightens the risk of cholera and other waterborne diseases emerging and spreading. The clashes have also led to the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of people in the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu. The humanitarian ceasefire announced by the M23 on 3 February has so far failed to open safe humanitarian corridors.

The offensive occurs amidst a continuing deterioration in diplomatic relations between the Congolese and Rwandan authorities and the resurgence of actions by the M23 and its allies on Congolese territory since the end of 2021. National and international human rights organizations have raised concerns about the risks of the conflict expanding in the region and the instrumentalization of the conflict to commit human rights violations, particularly against lawyers and human rights defenders¹. According to the latest information gathered by our organisations, human rights defenders have been threatened by Congolese authorities with legal action to dissuade them from releasing information that would create panic among the population or undermine the dignity and honour of the DRC. At least four female human rights defenders have had their homes visited and monitored by M23 elements. Other defenders who were particularly at risk have been forced to flee the country to escape persecution. Cases of summary executions and sexual violence involving the belligerents were also documented during the offensive². At least 35 cases of rape of women and girls in the commune of Karisimbi in Goma have been reported by our organisations. Cases of forced recruitment of young people by the M23 on the outskirts of Goma have also been reported, and two young people who refused to collaborate with the armed group were killed. Our organisations fear widespread human rights violations, including cases of torture and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatments, targeting civilians based on community affiliation, gender, professional and/or associative activity.

In the context of the special session of the United Nations Human Rights Council on the human rights situation in eastern DRC, the signatory organisations recommend that the members of the Human Rights Council and the international community:

¹Democratic Republic of the Congo: analysis of the situation of human rights defenders who have criticised the lifting of the moratorium on the death penalty, 10 October 2024, par.17 à 21 <https://www.fiacat.org/en/publications-en/reports/geographic-reports/africa/3241-report-on-the-situation-of-abolitionist-human-rights-defenders-in-democratic-republic-of-the-congo>

² UN News, RDC : le M23 accusé d'exécutions sommaires et l'armée congolaise de violences sexuelles, 31 janvier 2025 <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2025/01/1152676>

- Publicly condemn the serious human rights violations, some of which may amount to torture, and demand the immediate cessation of hostilities;
- Take all necessary measures to establish humanitarian corridors, facilitate the movement of civilians, and facilitate access to humanitarian aid, in particular, ensure access to essential supplies and medical care;
- Take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of civilians under immediate threat of physical violence and provide appropriate support to victims;
- Strengthen protection mechanisms for human rights defenders and lawyers under threat by providing them with material support for temporary relocation;
- Establish an independent mandate to conduct thorough investigations into all violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law perpetrated by all parties to the conflict since the resurgence of the M23 at the end of 2021;
- Ensure that the mandate identifies, prosecutes, and punishes any perpetrators and provides effective reparations to victims.



List of signatory organisations :

N°	NGO NAME AND ACRONYM
1	Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture - RDC (ACAT RDC)
2	Action des jeunes pour le bien-être social (AJBS)
3	Action collective pour la réduction de la pauvreté et la promotion technologique (ACRPPT)
4	Action humanitaire pour la paix et le développement
5	Action pour le développement communautaire rural (ADECOR)
6	APVEC-ONGDH
7	Association pour le développement intégral des Peuples Autochtones de Bongandanga « ADIPAB »

8	AFIA MAMA Asbl (coordination du Consortium de la solidarité humanitaire pour l'est de la RDC)
9	Association des Amis des Victimes des Droits de l'Homme (AVVDH)
10	Alliance pour l'Universalité des Droits Fondamentaux (AUDF)
11	Centre international de formation et d'encadrement en droits humains (CIFEDH)
12	Collectif des femmes de la Mongala (COLFEM)
13	Dynamique des femmes forces vives (DFFV)
14	Groupe d'appui aux jeunes et aux enfants nécessiteux (GAJEN)
15	Initiative des femmes actives pour le développement (IFAD)
16	International Federation of ACATs (FIACAT)
17	International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT)
18	La Voix des femmes paysannes (VFP)
19	Maniema Liberté
20	Omega Research Foundation
21	Redress
22	Réseau de Protection des DDH du Maniema (REHASHEMA)
23	Regroupement des Mamans de Kamituga (REMAK)
24	Réseau de protection provincial des défenseurs des droits de l'homme (RPPDDH)
25	SOS-Information Juridique Multisectorielle, RDC (SOS-IJM)
26	United Against Torture Consortium (UATC)
27	World Organisation against Torture (OMCT)