EASTERN DRC SITUATION

29 May 2025

Congolese refugee Chancelline and her family settle into their new life at the Musenyi refugee site in southern Burundi in March 2025. ©UNHCR/Charity Nzomo

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Armed violence continues to drive displacement across eastern DRC, with thousands reportedly forced to flee their homes in North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri provinces.**
- **Amnesty International documented serious human rights violations against detainees in Goma and Bukavu**, including killings, torture, enforced disappearances, and inhumane conditions of detention.
- The protection environment in eastern DRC remains deeply concerning. **Between 20 and 27 May, UNHCR and its partners documented at least 789 human rights violations in South Kivu alone.**
- **A total of 1,798 refugees were repatriated from the DRC to Rwanda.** UNHCR remains committed to safeguarding the rights of refugees and displaced persons and will continue to advocate for solutions that respect their dignity, safety, and informed choices.
- At a regional meeting in Uganda, twelve African countries, including Rwanda, **condemned the establishment of parallel administrations in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).**
- **Over 114,000 people have fled violence in eastern DRC to neighboring countries since the start of the year.** UNHCR and partners are supporting not just emergency assistance, but also access to services, self-reliance, and inclusion from the outset—laying the groundwork for more sustainable solutions for both refugees and host communities.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

- **Fighting continues across eastern Democratic Republic of Congo,** with frequent clashes in North Kivu's Masisi, Rutshuru, Walikale, and Lubero territories causing fresh and secondary displacement as armed groups vie for control. In South Kivu, **over 39,000 people were reportedly displaced across four territories between 20 and 27 May** due to similar violence. In Ituri Province, renewed fighting between non-state armed groups and government forces reportedly **forced an estimated 9,000 people to flee between 14 and 19 May**.
- The protection environment in eastern DRC remains deeply concerning. **Between 20 and 27 May, UNHCR and its partners documented at least 789 human rights violations in South Kivu alone,** up from 469 the previous week, with most cases (556) recorded in Kalehe Territory. Violations included killings, assaults, abductions, rape, and extortion. In North Kivu, violence against women and girls remains widespread, particularly affecting women and girls as they travel to markets or work in the fields. Return areas, including parts of Masisi Territory, are also affected, with local health facilities reporting shortages of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) kits.
- In Goma, the whereabouts of approximately **60 patients abducted from Virunga Hospital in mid-May remain unknown.** The individuals were reportedly targeted due to alleged links with government security forces. In a report released on 27 May, **Amnesty International documented serious human rights violations against detainees in Goma and Bukavu,** including killings, torture, enforced disappearances, and inhumane conditions of detention.
- On 17 May, President Gnassingbé of Togo, the African Union (AU) designated mediator for the DRC peace process, **convened the first meeting of the panel of co-facilitators in Lomé, aimed at restoring relations between the DRC and Rwanda**. On the sidelines of this meeting, President Gnassingbé met with the US Senior Adviser for Africa, Massad Boulos, where they committed to advancing all efforts aimed at achieving a durable peace in eastern DRC.
- **In a statement issued on 28 May at a regional meeting in Entebbe, twelve African countries, including Rwanda, condemned the establishment of parallel administrations in eastern DRC.** This comes at a time when the DRC and Rwanda are expected to sign a peace deal to end the war in Washington next week under the US-led initiative.
- In mid-May, around 2,000 foreign nationals, including refugees, were relocated by non-state authorities from Sake and Goma to UNHCR's transit centre in Goma. Between 17 and 22 May, repatriation convoys to Rwanda were organized for Rwandan refugees. **A total of 1,798 individuals returned with support from the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) and UNHCR.** UNHCR remains committed to safeguarding the rights of refugees and displaced persons and will continue to advocate for solutions that respect their dignity, safety, and informed choices.
- **UNHCR, in collaboration with its implementing partners, continues to deliver a comprehensive package of protection interventions in North and South Kivu, including:**
    - **Case Management:** UNHCR's GBV partner AIDPROFEN provided psychosocial support to 14 survivors in the Goma area over the period 20-27 May, including ten survivors of rape who were referred to health facilities within 72 hours for follow-up care. AIDPROFEN also convened a group therapy session for 28 IDP women survivors, aiming to contribute to the healing process for these women, all of whom have undergone individual therapy and continue to experience persistent symptoms of trauma. AIDPROFEN also continues to conduct awareness sessions on the referral pathway and assistance available to survivors, most recently reaching 20 IDP women in Goma.
    - **Awareness-raising/ community engagement:** UNHCR and its community-based protection partner INTERSOS, organized two community dialogue sessions with host community members, IDPs and local leaders in Sake and Bweremana in Masisi Territory, reaching 194 people. These sessions aimed to strengthen peaceful coexistence between IDPs and host communities.

- **Community-Based Protection:** Three workshops were held in Beni, Sake and Kanyaruchinya, respectively, to develop community-based protection plans. Attended by 61 people, the workshops helped to identify ten quick-impact projects which have been submitted for further analysis and validation.

- **UNHCR completed the distribution of cash assistance to 3,480 households in North Kivu.** Of these, 3,280 households received cash assistance for Non-Food Items (NFIs) while 200 households, primarily women at risk of GBV, benefited from targeted protection-based cash assistance.
- Following ongoing awareness-raising and intention surveys on voluntary repatriation among Burundian and Rwandan refugees in South Kivu, an additional 175 Burundian refugees (46 families) from the Mulongwe site have expressed their willingness to return home. **This brings the total number of refugees awaiting voluntary repatriation to 1,159, most of whom (974) are Burundian.**

REGIONAL UPDATES

- **As of 27 May, over 114,000 people have fled the DRC to neighbouring countries since the beginning of the year,** the majority of whom have arrived in Burundi and Uganda. The majority of new arrivals recorded over the reporting period continue to be to Uganda.
- **Following the recent completion of an enumeration exercise in Burundi, the reported number of new arrivals from the DRC has been revised from approximately 70,000 to just over 40,000.** The adjustment accounts for nearly 24,000 individuals who are believed to have returned to the DRC. With over 6,000 people still unaccounted for, the figures may continue to evolve in the weeks ahead.
- The latest figures on new arrivals to neighbouring countries are reflected in the Eastern DRC Displacement Dashboard, Burundi CORE and Uganda CORE, which are updated regularly and available on the **Operational Data Portal.**

Country	Total New Arrivals* since 1 Jan (as of 15 May unless specified)	Arrivals in the Past 7 Days
Burundi	40,387	7
Uganda	65,595 (as of 25 May)**	738
Zambia	1,476 (as of 27 May)	61
Rwanda	3,950***	642
Tanzania	3,038 (as of 27 May)	53
TOTAL	**114,446**	1,501

**For countries where data is available, the new arrivals figure includes returnees as well as refugees from third countries, alongside the Congolese new arrivals. The inclusion of these group reflects that returnee populations and third-country nationals may also have specific international protection and humanitarian needs.*
***Of the 70,400 people who have arrived in Burundi since January 2025, 40,387 are estimated to remain in Burundi. This includes over 5,000 Burundian refugees who have returned from the DRC.*
****This figure comprises 2,748 Rwandan refugee returnees who have been supported to return from the DRC to Rwanda. Of these, 1,792 have been recorded since 17 May.*

Burundi

- A recent enumeration exercise indicates that, of the estimated 70,400 people who crossed into Burundi from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) since January, **40,387 are estimated to remain in Burundi, including 35,041 DRC refugees**. Of these, 15,809 are living within host communities in Cibitoke Province, 16,526 have been relocated to the Musenyi site in Rutana Province, and 2,706 are currently accommodated in transit centres near the border.

According to Protection Monitoring Reports by UNHCR and partners in the DRC, over 23,700 individuals have spontaneously returned to the country.

- Among the 70,400 arrivals to Burundi from DRC, **5,346 comprise Burundians who have spontaneously returned from DRC.**
- On Africa Day, 25 May, the **Africa Ambassadors Group in Burundi visited the Musenyi Refugee Site alongside UNHCR, the Government of Burundi, UN agencies, and partners.** The visit served as an opportunity to acknowledge continued cooperation in support of refugees. The UNHCR Deputy Representative thanked the Ambassadors for their solidarity and the Government of Burundi for its generosity, including the provision of protection space and land for the site and its planned extension despite limited national resources.
- **Relocation to the Musenyi site resumed recently following a brief pause to ease overcrowding. On 21 May, 109 refugees were transferred from Cishemere Transit Centre to reunite with family members already at the site. Support for those living in Musenyi continues, including**:
  - **Registration:** Individual biometric registration is ongoing at the Musenyi refugee site to collect accurate information and data for tailored assistance. So far, 10,738 refugees from 2,703 households have been registered.
  - **Nutrition:** On 19 May, WFP provided supplementary nutrition supplies to the Musenyi health post to support treatment for children with Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM). By 23 May, 94 children had been enrolled in the supplementary feeding programme, and 19 more had been admitted for treatment of Severe Acute Malnutrition. Concerns around malnutrition persist, particularly as WFP has had to reduce daily food rations from 75% to 50% since March due to limited resources.
  - **Health:** On May 20, UNFPA, Programme National sur la Santé de la Reproduction (PNSR), and Population Services International (PSI) visited the Musenyi Site to assess the reproductive health needs of young people, with the aim of providing the necessary response. The Association des Femmes Médecins du Burundi (a WHO partner) continues to support primary healthcare. UNFPA, through its local NGO (Global Development Community), is supporting initiatives on reproductive health.
  - **Coordination:** The Musenyi Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) holds regular meetings. In the last meeting on 19 May, the ISCG discussed key challenges, including the lack of family shelters, and discussed plans to upgrade sanitation facilities by, for instance, replacing emergency latrines with durable latrines. Activated under the UNHCR-led Refugee Coordination Model (RCM), the ISCG is chaired by UNHCR and comprises other UN agencies, NGOs and relevant government line ministries, including the National Officer for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (ONPRA).

Uganda

- Since the beginning of the year, **Uganda has received over 65,500 new arrivals from the DRC, with approximately 57,600 registered so far.** Between 19 and 25 May alone, 738 new arrivals were recorded, marking a 20% increase from the previous week. Children under 12 make up about 33 per cent of all arrivals this year. The majority—around 64 per cent—entered Uganda through crossing points in Kisoro District, including Bunagana, Nteko, and Busanza in the country's southwest.
- **The recent decline in new arrivals is reportedly linked to several factors, including ongoing movement restrictions imposed by non-state actors along border areas in the DRC.** The months of May and June have historically seen fewer cross-border movements, partly due to the rainy season. Heavy rains make travel more difficult and sometimes lead to a temporary slowdown in the activities of armed groups.

- As of 25 May, **4,167 asylum seekers were residing in transit and reception centres across Uganda while awaiting relocation to more permanent settlements—a 51 per cent drop from 8,432 on 11 May.** The decrease is due to a combination of faster processing and fewer new arrivals. Among the sites, only Kabanza Reception Centre remained over capacity, at 111 per cent.
- **Among those recently relocated to settlements such as Nakivale, a high number of unaccompanied and separated children have been identified.** This is largely due to separation during flight, as well as parents or caregivers leaving the settlement in search of livelihood opportunities. In response, UNHCR and child protection partners are stepping up their support, including family tracing and reunification, case management with psychosocial support, and identifying interim and alternative care arrangements.

Tanzania

- UNHCR and its partner, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), are working together in Nyarugusu Refugee Camp to construct temporary shelters and WASH facilities for Congolese asylum seekers. **Since the start of the year, 818 emergency family shelters and 195 temporary shared latrines have been built. This has enabled the relocation of 2,142 registered asylum seekers from the DRC, helping to alleviate overcrowding at the camp's reception centre**, which is currently accommodating over 500 new arrivals.

Zambia

- UNHCR continues to assist new arrivals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo at four main border transit centres in Zambia—Kaputa, Chiengi, Nsumbu, and Mpulungu. Most are relocated to Mantapala settlement, though some proceed directly to Meheba, Mayukwayukwa, or Lusaka. **As of 27 May, Zambia had registered 1,476 new arrivals since the start of 2025, including 119 in May alone** through various entry points such as Mpulungu, Chinonde, Lupiya, and Kashiba.
- Between 19 and 25 May, **four new arrivals from Pweto and Moba in the DRC were received at Mantapala Transit Centre, bringing the current population to 75.** A total of 21 individuals have been relocated to Mantapala from border transit centres so far in May. New arrivals undergo registration and health and nutrition screenings upon arrival to ensure timely access to basic services.
- **UNHCR has introduced a new arrivals form to collect information on drivers of displacement and immediate protection needs**. Based on this anecdotal information, many people arriving via Pweto report fleeing escalating violence involving the Mbote and Elema armed groups, while those arriving via Moba have reported fleeing due to insecurity resulting from clashes between Mai Mai and Mukata-Katanga rebels.
- **Key gaps remain in the response to new arrivals in Mantapala Settlement.** Core relief items are limited, with priority given to persons with specific needs. Cash assistance has faced delays due to technical issues, though efforts are underway to resolve them. WASH infrastructure requires upgrades, including additional latrines and repairs to existing ones. Health services are overstretched, with just two staff serving a population of 20,000. While asylum-seeking children can access education under Zambia's *Education For All* policy, the teacher-student ratio remains high at 1:99, even with the temporary deployment of 18 student teachers.

Rwanda

- **Since the start of the year, 2,748 Rwandan returnees have been received, including 1,792 who arrived in the most recent return convoys between 17 and 22 May.** In light of the

higher-than-expected numbers, UNHCR has revised its planning figures upward, now projecting that up to 10,000 returnees may require assistance by July 2025—four times the initial estimate.

- Returnees are received at the border by Rwandan authorities, who conduct identity checks and health screenings. UNHCR and partners provide onward transportation to transit centres, along with food, shelter, essential non-food items, medical care, and protection services for children and survivors of gender-based violence. UNHCR also supports the Government in facilitating transport to areas of origin and provides cash assistance to help returnees rebuild their lives.

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