



(<https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/rising-tension-and-rebel-forces-what-happening-between-drc-and-rwanda-36796>)

(<https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/rising-tension-and-rebel-forces-what-happening-between-drc-and-rwanda-36796>)

(<https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/rising-tension-and-rebel-forces-what-happening-between-drc-and-rwanda-36796>)

(<https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/rising-tension-and-rebel-forces-what-happening-between-drc-and-rwanda-36796>)

(<https://www.ispionline.it/en/publication/rising-tension-and-rebel-forces-what-happening-between-drc-and-rwanda-36796>)

EN (/en/publication/rising-tension-and-rebel-forces-what-happening-between-drc-and-rwanda-36796)

IT (/it/pubblicazione/cresce-la-tensione-tra-ruanda-e-repubblica-democratica-del-congo-che-succede-36795)



Rising Tension and Rebel Forces: What Is Happening Between DRC and Rwanda?

Filip Reyntjens (/en/bio/filip-reyntjens)
25 November 2022

The relations between the DRC and Rwanda **have continued to deteriorate** since the analysis published here in mid-June (<https://www.ispionline.it/en/publicazione/here-they-come-again-troubled-relations-between-rwanda-and-congo-36795>). The conflict in eastern DRC is the **longstanding rivalry between Rwanda and Uganda**, the stakes being both military and economic. It takes place within a complex regional picture, where rival countries support **rebel groups** in neighbouring countries with a destination of mutual accusations and denials. When in November 2021 ([**Two regional peace initiatives were launched**, one led by Angolan president João Lourenço on behalf of the African Union \(AU\) and the other by the East African Community \(EAC\), of which both Rwanda and the DRC are members. Nevertheless, **the conflict rapidly escalated**. Already in May 2022, the DRC suspended all recently signed accords with Rwanda and RwandAir was banned from Congolese airspace. On 20 June, **an EAC summit in Nairobi** \(<https://www.galaxyfm.co.ug/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/STATEMENT-FROM-NAIROBI-KENYA-19-JUNE-2022.pdf>\) 'to stabilise and secure the peace in the DRC'. It also directed that **'an immediate ceasefire should be enforced** and cease hostilities immediately', yet neither specifying the parties involved, nor mentioning Rwanda or the M23.](https://africacenter.org/spotlight/rwanda-drc-risk-of-war-new-m23-r-explainer/#:~:text=Rwanda%20and%20the%20DRC%20at%20Risk%20of%20War.of%20longstanding%20regional%20rivalries%20between%20Rwanda%20and%20Uganda,agreed with the Congolese government to deploy its armed forces in the DRC, without consulting Rwanda, Kigali reacted with force, the M23, which it had supported ten years earlier until it was defeated by an international military intervention. On 13 June 2022, the M23, an important trading centre on the DRC-Uganda border. All along the crisis, Kinshasa accused the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) of involvement in the past, Kigali denied any involvement in what it called 'an internal Congolese conflict' and, in turn, it accused Kinshasa of co-sponsoring the démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda (FDLR), a Rwandan rebel movement that has been active in the DRC since 2000.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Congolese accusations against Rwanda were vindicated by the **UN Group of Experts on the DRC**. In a public report published on 18 July (<https://www.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/338/70/PDF/N2233870.pdf?OpenElement>), it found that Rwanda and Uganda had provided support to the M23. The Group was much more explicit in a leaked July confidential update. It had gathered 'solid evidence (<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/rwanda-has-intervened-militarily-eastern-congo-2022-08-04/>)' of military operations by the RDF on Congolese territory and of support to the M23. It also accused the M23 of **indiscriminate shelling, killing of civilians and attacking the UN peacekeeping force Monusco**. On 18 July, the Congolese army members forged *ad hoc* alliances with local armed groups, including the FDLR, to fight M23. The Group also expressed concern over **hate speech**, hostility and violence against Rwandophone populations in eastern DRC. Human Rights Watch (HRW) likewise accused the Congolese army of **deliberate killings**. It called on donor countries to 'suspend military assistance to governments found to be supporting the M23' (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/07/25/dr-congo-resurgent-m23-rebels-target-civilians>). HRW later also accused Congolese army units of **aiding abusive armed groups** (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/18/dr-congo-army-units-aided-abusive-armed-groups>).

Rwanda became increasingly concerned about international condemnations, particularly by the US. [During a visit to Kigali on 11/](https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-rwandan-foreign-minister-vincent-biruta-at-a-joint-press-availability/) (<https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-and-rwandan-foreign-minister-vincent-biruta-at-a-joint-press-availability/>), reports that Rwanda continues to support the M23 rebel group and has its armed forces inside the DRC, and insisted that 'every **territorial integrity** of the others'. At a 26 October UN Security Council briefing on the Great Lakes Region, [the US representative](https://usun.usmission.gov/remarks-at-a-un-security-council-briefing-on-the-great-lakes-region-3/) (<https://usun.usmission.gov/remarks-at-a-un-security-council-briefing-on-the-great-lakes-region-3/>) to end their assistance to On 8 September, Congolese president Félix Tshisekedi signed the agreement on the status of the regional EAC force to be deplc Kivu provinces. Two weeks later, addressing the UN General Assembly, he again accused Rwanda of a 'direct military aggression the past, **Kigali vehemently denied the accusations** and insisted that the DRC was collaborating with anti-Rwanda groups. The [on 25 October the Congolese government denounced](https://depeche.cd/2022/10/25/m23-au-nord-kivu-en-reaction-au-cor-pas-comprendre-quun-gouvernement-etranger-puisse-prendre-la-defense-dun-groupe-arme/) (<https://depeche.cd/2022/10/25/m23-au-nord-kivu-en-reaction-au-cor-pas-comprendre-quun-gouvernement-etranger-puisse-prendre-la-defense-dun-groupe-arme/>) Kagame's 'permanent strategy 'traditional deceitful rhetoric', reaffirming its determination 'to put an end to the criminal and terrorist activities of M23 supported k **Rwandan ambassador to the DRC** on 30 October signalled a new low in bilateral relations.

In the June analysis, I suggested that Kenya and Tanzania should take strong initiatives to avoid further destabilisation of the EAC politically and militarily. Politically, **Kenyatta has actively taken up his role as mediator for the EAC** by practising a good deal of deployment of the EAC regional force decided in June effectively started. On 12 November, **the first Kenyan contingent arrived i Goma**. The total strength of the force will include two battalions from Kenya, Uganda and Burundi each, and one from South Suc **not part of the regional military initiative**. The force commander, [Kenyan General Jeff Nyagah](https://www.thedefense-dr-congo/), vowed (<https://www.thedefense-dr-congo/>) that Goma, which was threatened by the advancing M23, would 'not be taken'. Although a direct confrontation between may imply the risk of fighting between Rwandan and Kenyan armies on Congolese soil, **it is more likely that the 2013 scenario v a regional military intervention and Rwanda prevented by international actors from derailing the process**. Such a military outcom longer-term political solutions, both within the DRC and in the region. On the one hand, **the Congolese state must regain admin entire territory**, including by eliminating domestic and foreign nonstate armed groups. On the other hand, **neighbours such as L end their interference in the DRC's affairs**, through both the support of proxy rebel forces and the illegal exploitation of natural r

The text was finalized on 25 November

READ MORE:



[Conflict Management in the MENA Region \(/en/publicazione/conflict-management-mena-region-36662\)](/en/publicazione/conflict-management-mena-region-36662)

Chiara Lovotti (/en/bio/chiara-lovotti) ISPI, Alissa Pavia (/en/bio/alissa-pavia) Atlantic Council

[/en/publicazione/conflict-management-mena-region-36662\)](/en/publicazione/conflict-management-mena-region-36662)



[Mali: West Out, Russia In, and Then? \(/en/publicazione/mali-west-out-russia-and-then-36711\)](/en/publicazione/mali-west-out-russia-and-then-36711)

Petr Tůma (/en/bio/petr-tuma) Atlantic Council Europe Center

[/en/publicazione/mali-west-out-russia-and-then-36711\)](/en/publicazione/mali-west-out-russia-and-then-36711)



["Conflict Management" À-La-Russe in the Middle East and Africa \(/en/publicazione/conflict-management-la-russe-middle-east-and-africa-36665\)](/en/publicazione/conflict-management-la-russe-middle-east-and-africa-36665)

Chiara Lovotti (/en/bio/chiara-lovotti) ISPI

</en/publicazione/conflict-management-la-russe-middle-east->