

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO: RENEWED FIGHTING

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The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 01/2004) is being issued

- For information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

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The Situation

Fighting broke out in the eastern town of Bukavu, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) on 26 May between soldiers loyal to the Kinshasa government and renegade soldiers of a former Rwandan-backed rebel group in the country, IRIN reported. The UN mission in DRC (MONUC) reported that the fighting in Bukavu broke out when dissident fighters took on a group of fighters loyal to a former Goma regional commander.

In the capital, Kinshasa, home to some 2.8 million people, demonstrators thronged the streets, shutting down schools and businesses, and erected barricades. Large crowds of students hurled stones at the MONUC headquarters in the city. They expressed anger against the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) for what they perceived as its failure to prevent armed dissidents from seizing part of the eastern town of Bukavu.

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An estimated 1,000 Congolese Tutsi, known as Banyamulenge, crossed into Burundi on Tuesday after they fled their homes in east on 8 June, over fears of an attack by their Mayi-Mayi neighbors. The refugees comprised mainly of women and children from the Congolese border regions of Sange, Uvira and Kiriba in the eastern province of South Kivu.

The fighting caused panic and widespread population dislocations. The crisis in Bukavu is arguably one of the biggest faced by the DRC's transitional government, since its establishment in July 2003, following a December 2002 power-sharing accord between the administration of President Kabila and rebel groups which controlled the North and East of the country. It has led to the displacement of significant numbers of people and interrupted relief operations in parts of the country (IRIN).

A ceasefire signed by rival groups in the eastern town of Bukavu was broken on Wednesday morning following the withdrawal of dissident troops late Tuesday. Government troops re-entered the recently embattled Bukavu town on Wednesday without resistance. Some headed towards Uvira, 118 km to the South, and others North-east towards the border with Rwanda, the UN reported.

UN troops are now patrolling the streets to prevent further looting of shops and offices of humanitarian agencies as well as to prevent acts of retaliation between ethnic groups. Security concerns were hindering humanitarian operations in the area.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Led by the President of the DR Congo Provincial Red Cross, the [Red Cross Society of the DRC](#) in Bukavu carried out an emergency assessment and reported that 103 people have been wounded while a total of 39 people died (18 civilians and 21 soldiers).

The students rioted in Kinshasa and other major cities of the DRC (Lumumbashi, Mbandaka and Goma). In Kinshasa, the Red Cross visited the various hospitals and health centres to assess the number of wounded, dead or seeking medical assistance.

ICRC supported the Red Cross volunteers (trained by both the Federation and ICRC in Community based first aid and emergency response) in providing medical supplies and ambulance services to transport the wounded to hospital and to remove the dead. From its own resources, the Red Cross provided assistance to seven hospitals with 10 cartons of bandages, 500 gloves, 50 rolls of 500 grams of dressings, 20 litres of disinfectants and 100 blankets. Experienced first aid volunteers by the ICRC and the Federation were involved in various assessments and operations in Kinshasa and other parts of the country.

Coordination

The Federation, ICRC, Belgian and Spanish Red Cross held coordination meetings on security and possible Red Cross intervention. The national society and the Federation continue to assess the situation and would soon be able to determine what interventions would be necessary.

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