

Security Council

The situation in the DRC

The situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is in serious risk of escalating. The DRC has a long history of conflict, and over 5 million people are believed to have died during the two Congo Wars between 1996 and 2003, which also displaced 2,6 million people in the DRC and forced 500 000 to flee the country. Today the situation in the Western part of the country is more stable, in part thanks to MONUSCO, the world's largest UN peacekeeping operation, but the eastern provinces of the country are still ravaged by violence. Armed groups continue to commit mass atrocities against civilians, and sexual violence is prevalent. The government has struggled to uphold its responsibility to protect civilians, and its own forces have been complicit in previous mass atrocity crimes. MONUSCO has also failed in preventing attacks against civilians, and trust in the operation has been eroded by accusations of UN peacekeepers engaged in sexual exploitation and abuse.

There is grave risk that the insecurity in the region deepens and spread to other areas due to tensions surrounding the DRC's presidential elections. The elections were supposed to be held in November 2016, but in early October, the electoral commission announced they would not meet the deadline and elections would be postponed to April 2018. President Kabila, whose term ends on the 19th of December 2016, shows no sign of stepping down. Political demonstrations have led to at least 50 civilians being killed and opposition headquarters being burned down, and there have been reports of increased repression throughout the country. The Secretary-General's Special Representative in the DRC has warned the tensions may quickly lead to large-scale violence, and that MONUSCO is not equipped to handle an escalated situation.

To deter further violence and to prevent a Third Congo War, the Security Council should take urgent measures to prevent the situation from escalating, including actions outlined in the Responsibility to Protect principle. The United Nations Security Council and the international community must unite in its responsibility to protect civilians in the DRC and to prevent mass atrocity crimes. The United Nations Security Council must also deal with the issue of sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers and ensure that those who are tasked with protecting civilians do not commit crimes themselves.

The Security Council is specifically asked to address the following issues:

1. The responsibility of the Congolese authorities and the international community to protect all Congolese civilians from mass atrocity crimes;
2. The formulation and implementation of a new mandate for MONUSCO in order to correspond to the changing situation and improve the operation's ability to protect civilians from mass atrocity crimes;
3. The accusations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN peacekeepers.