

OENZ Dossier: The M23 Crisis in Eastern DRC

Today, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is facing a severe humanitarian and political crisis. In the Kivu region, up to 500.000 persons are internally displaced due to continuing military clashes. More than 60.000 people have fled to the neighbouring countries. Local civil society organizations and national church leaders have urged the international community and the leading members of the UN Security Council to take action and intervene on behalf of the suffering population in the crisis region.

Since the flawed presidential and parliamentary elections in November 2011 the government of the DR Congo lost reputation and support, both abroad and at home. In the Eastern DRC, criminal forces and militias like Mayi-Mayi, FDLR, PARECO and others seized the opportunity to challenge the weakened government in Kinshasa. Additionally, the neighbouring Rwandan leadership makes use of the power vacuum in the Congolese governmental structures by supporting a new force in the Kivu region. In June 2012 the leadership of the CNDP, officially fully integrated in the Congolese national army FARDC, declared that they would no longer accept their adherence to the Goma Peace Agreement of 23 March 2009. Many deserted and launched a mutiny called M23 rebellion. The annex to the UN Experts Group for the DR Congo Report (S/2012/348/Add.1) demonstrates that this mutiny has been supported by the government of Rwanda with weapons, logistics and even troops.

Several similar incidents have taken place since 1994. They illustrate that Rwanda's motivation to invade and control Congolese territory is not only to increase its national security, but rather to protect Rwandan economic interests in the exploitation and illegal export of Congolese natural resources.

By now, the M23 movement succeeded to occupy large parts of the Northern Kivu province and to control the local markets and the trade chains for minerals like Coltan, gold or tin. It also aims at establishing a parallel local administration and taxation system. Reports of international observers like Human Rights Watch illustrate that M23 installed its control with the use of brutal military force, including lootings, killings, sexual violence and the recruitment of child soldiers.

The M23 leadership has profited to a great extent from the fact that the Congolese government has not managed to achieve substantial developments concerning the security sector reform and the reinstallation of a functional justice system since the 2006 elections. The FARDC as well as the local and national courts are still weakened by endemic corruption and a lack of resources and political support. Members of the FARDC are also known for repeated human rights violations, lootings, killings and the illegal taxation of local markets. This leaves the local population as prey for corrupt and violent members of the national army, the militias and mafia-like business networks.

Unfortunately, MONUSCO has neither the mandate nor the capacities to cover the weaknesses of the national Congolese security forces and to protect the local population to a sufficient degree. Therefore, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region ICGLR has come up with the plan to install a "neutral force" with up to 4.000 soldiers from African

states that are not involved in the conflict. So far, no state has offered financial or military support for this force, so that a speedy deployment seems unrealistic.

States such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, the United States and Germany have shown their disapproval for the Rwandan intervention in the DR Congo and stopped their budget support or their military cooperation with Rwanda. This has been a strong diplomatic signal to motivate the leadership in Kigali to withdraw from the Congolese territory and play a more constructive role in the resolution of the crisis.

Any peace-building option can only be successful, if there is a serious and monitored commitment by DRC's neighbouring states, treaty parties to the ICGLR, to reform the frequent violent and illegal economic exploitation into a peaceful regional economic system.

In view of the humanitarian crisis in the Eastern DR Congo and in disapproval of the military intervention of Rwanda, we urge Germany and the other members of the UN Security Council to:

- examine a denial of Rwanda's designated mandate as a non-permanent member of the UNSC in the next session, until Rwanda has fully stopped its active intervention in the DRC or its support to armed groups like the CNDP or the M23
- find a common strategy with the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and the United States and define clear benchmarks for the Government of Rwanda in order to return to full budget support from these donor states.
- improve MONUSCO's capacities for the protection of Congolese civilians against military forces
- install an active cooperation of MONUSCO with the ICGLR in case the "neutral force" is established in order to allow an integrated approach for both forces with the common goal to improve local security and protection
- motivate the Government of the DR Congo to take active steps in regard of the security sector reform and the reform of the national and local justice system in order to keep perpetrators of human rights violations accountable
- increase MONUSCO's capacities for the demobilization of armed forces and develop an integrated and long-term reintegration program for former combatants (DDRRR)
- motivate the Government of the DR Congo to improve its governance, implement the full election cycle and install functional administrative structures in all provinces to allow local political participation and improve the mechanisms for civil conflict resolution.

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