

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, 1996-PRESENT

More than 6 million people have died in the world's bloodiest conflict since World War II, caused by political violence, conflict over valuable resources, and spillover fighting from the 1994 genocide in neighboring Rwanda.



Where?

The DRC (formerly Zaire), the size of Alaska and Montana combined, has a population of 63 million. Although citizens of the DRC are among the poorest in the world, untapped raw mineral deposits are estimated to be worth US\$ 24 trillion.

When?

The violence in DRC is related to the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Spillover fighting led to the First Congo War in 1996. The Second Congo War began in 1998 and officially ended in 2003, but eastern Congo continues to be extremely unstable. A proxy war between Rwanda and the Congolese government continued until 2008. Congolese Tutsi warlord General Laurent Nkunda waged a campaign to destroy Hutu rebels from the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). He accused the Congolese government of backing the FDLR. Rwanda and Congo joined forces to combat the FDLR but the conflict has continued unabated. Congolese government troops and thousands of UN peacekeepers have failed to defeat the FDLR.

Most forces in the conflict are non-governmental militias and disarming or controlling them has proved difficult. Conflict continues over the plentiful natural resources in the DRC. Violence is especially prevalent in the East, which is rich in minerals, diamonds, gold, and timber. DRC has large quantities of gold, copper, diamonds, and coltan (a mineral used in cell phones), which many parties desire to control for monetary reasons. Large-scale plunder and murder displace people from resource-rich land.

The Lord's Resistance Army has expanded its operations from Uganda into the DRC. The LRA is notorious for kidnapping children, forcing them to kill and maim innocent victims, and enslaving young girls as concubines. Attacks by the LRA are currently spreading fear and the threat of famine through northeast DRC as the LRA extends its abduction and terror raids across the region.



How?

More than 6 million have died in Congo since 1996. The long and brutal conflict in the DRC has caused massive suffering for civilians. Infant and child mortality rates are extremely high as a result of famine and malnutrition. Almost 6 million people are internally displaced or refugees in Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Fighting continues in eastern parts of the country, destroying infrastructure and environment, causing physical and psychological damage to civilians, and creating human rights violations on a mass scale. The prevalence of rape and other sexual violence is the worst in the world and contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS. The education, healthcare, and legal systems are in shambles.

Response

The UN's current mission in Congo, MONUC, is entering its thirteenth year. MONUC is the UN's largest and longest-lasting mission to date. With 18,000 troops, MONUC is spread thin and is largely unable to halt attacks. Rebels continue to kill and plunder natural resources with impunity. The international community's support for political and diplomatic efforts to end the war has been relatively consistent, but no effective steps have been taken to abide by repeated pledges to demand accountability for the war crimes and crimes against humanity that are routinely committed in Congo.