

## **Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo – Uvira and M23 Developments**

December 23, 2025

### **Key Developments**

Rwanda-backed M23 rebels announced the start of a withdrawal from Uvira, a strategic city in South Kivu captured earlier this month, following U.S.-brokered mediation efforts. However, local and security sources report that M23 police units, plainclothes soldiers, and intelligence operatives remain deployed at key locations across the city. M23 officials have acknowledged that intelligence services and police elements were deliberately left behind during the initial phase of the withdrawal. Control of Uvira had enabled M23 to secure the land border with Burundi, temporarily cutting off the DRC from cross-border military and logistical support.

### **Security Situation**

Despite the withdrawal announcement, clashes erupted in and around Uvira between M23 elements and pro-government Wazalendo militias, with gunfire heard across the city and civilian life largely paralyzed. Fighting has been concentrated in surrounding hills and southern neighborhoods, including areas near the port of Kalundu on Lake Tanganyika. Armed fighters are reported to have repositioned north of the city, but residents continue to report fear, uncertainty, and limited state protection. Congolese authorities have characterized the withdrawal as partial and potentially tactical, warning it may serve as a distraction rather than a full disengagement. International observers note that while the pullback follows diplomatic efforts involving Rwanda and the DRC, fighting continues elsewhere in eastern Congo.

### **Humanitarian Impact**

The escalating violence in eastern DRC has triggered a major refugee outflow into neighboring Burundi, with an estimated 76,000–84,000 Congolese fleeing in December alone, overwhelming local reception capacity. UNHCR, the ICRC, and other aid agencies report severe humanitarian strain, including shortages of shelter, food, and medical services. Amnesty International and other organizations have warned of underreported war crimes, civilian casualties, family separations, and child recruitment in affected regions, including South Kivu.

### **International Response**

The UN Security Council has unanimously renewed the mandate of the MONUSCO peacekeeping mission for an additional year amid intensified M23 offensives. The mission's core focus remains North Kivu and Ituri, with any deployment in South Kivu subject to strict conditions. The Council also renewed the Force Intervention Brigade on an exceptional basis and warned of a rapidly deteriorating security and humanitarian crisis in eastern DRC. The United States has accused Rwanda of inflaming the conflict

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through its support of M23, even as diplomatic pressure appears to have contributed to the announced withdrawal. U.S. and international officials are urging sustained engagement to prevent reprisals, renewed fighting, or remilitarization of Uvira, alongside expanded humanitarian funding and regional coordination, particularly to support Burundi's refugee response.

### **Outlook**

While M23's declared withdrawal from Uvira presents a potential opening for de-escalation, the continued presence of M23 security and intelligence elements, ongoing clashes, and unresolved regional dynamics raise serious doubts about near-term stability. The situation remains fluid, with high risks of renewed violence, worsening humanitarian conditions, and regional spillover if diplomatic and security guarantees fail.

### **References:**

1. [Clashes In DR Congo's Uvira After M23 Promised To Withdraw - Barron's](#)
2. [Security Council renews DR Congo peacekeeping mission amid renewed M23 offensives in the east | UN News](#)
3. [M23 Police Still Present As Armed Group Withdraws From DR Congo City - Barron's](#)
4. [Congo's Most Powerful Rebel : General Sultani Makenga of M23](#)
5. [Operation Kitona: How Rwanda Almost Took Over Congo](#)
6. [The WarLord Who Ruled Eastern Congo](#)
7. [SHOCKER: US confronts Rwanda and Kagame LIVE at UN](#)

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