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### Technical assistance and capacity-building

## Written statement\* submitted by Elizka Relief Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[28 January 2024]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



# Violations by Armed Movements in Democratic Republic of the Congo

## Introduction:

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is grappling with severe and catastrophic consequences resulting from attacks by rebel movements, particularly in the eastern regions. For over 30 years, more than 120 rebel and armed groups have been engaged in clashes, attacks, and violations, leading to grave human rights abuses across political, civil, economic, social, and cultural spheres. These violations account for approximately 77% of the estimated 2,708 human rights violations documented between March and August 2023.

## 1. Violations of Right to Life:

Armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are responsible for numerous violations of the right to life, including kidnappings and acts of intimidation. From April 1 to September 10, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) conducted 101 attacks, resulting in the deaths of 406 civilians, including 56 women and 53 children, predominantly in the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu. Between September 15 and October 2023, the March 23 Movement carried out 97 attacks against civilians, resulting in the deaths of 124 individuals, including 15 women and 11 children. The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) was also accountable for 17 attacks, leading to the deaths of 13 people, including one woman and three children. Recent violations occurred in January 2024, where on January 12, an armed attack against displaced individuals due to sectarian conflict caused four deaths and over five injuries. On January 10, ADF fighters beheaded five civilians in the village of Matissek, located between North Kivu and Kivu provinces in Ituri(1). Additionally, on January 5 in Babosoko(2), five civilians were killed, and five armed men were kidnapped in the Rutshuru and Masisi regions of North Kivu.

These incidents are accompanied by violations of the right to life reported in late 2023, particularly in December and November. On December 27, armed individuals killed three civilians in Mambao village(3). On December 26, at least seven people, including three women, were beheaded in the village of Maboo near Mamovi in the western part of Beni Province (North Kivu)(4). Furthermore, on November 24, ADF fighters killed at least 14 individuals with machetes in three villages surrounding the Mamov locality, west of Beni Province (North Kivu)(5). On November 17, the death toll from the attack on Kitsanga village by the Allied Democratic Forces rose to 42 people(6).

## 2. Violations of Displacement and Forced Displacement:

Armed groups operating in the eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are among the primary causes of displacement violations and forced displacement. These actions have resulted in the displacement of over 1.7 million and 2.4 million individuals in South Kivu and North Kivu, respectively, contributing to a total of more than 6.9 million internally displaced people. Among them, 5.6 million are displaced in the eastern provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika. The most recent violations in this regard occurred in January 2024. Particularly on January 15, residents of nine villages in the Kibumba and Buumba groups, located in the Nyiragongo region of North Kivu, were forcibly deported from their homes due to warnings issued by the March 23 Movement. Additionally, on January 9, armed clashes between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Mai-Mai Baraka militiamen resulted in the town of Mangina being emptied of social and economic activities(7).

### **3. Violations of Gender-Based Violence:**

Violations of gender-based violence, encompassing sexual, physical, and psychological abuse, are deeply intertwined with the actions of armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Social violence against women has reached alarming levels, with an estimated 7.4 million people at risk of gender-based violence. Shockingly, statistics from January 2024 indicate that 1 in every 2 Congolese women experience sexual and gender-based violence during their lifetime, particularly in the eastern provinces. Recent violations have been reported at the end of 2023 and the beginning of 2024. In July 2023 alone, at least 1,500 women were subjected to rape in Bunia, Ituri(8). Furthermore, on November 15, 2023, approximately twenty cases of sexual and gender-based violence were documented in the provinces of Walongo and Muinga, located in South Kivu(9).

### **4. Violations of Right to Movement:**

In addition to violations of the right to life, sexual violence, and forced displacement, the practices of armed groups in east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo also led to violations of the right to movement. These groups obstruct the movement of people, and threaten, and intimidate the Congolese population. On January 11, 2024, the M23 group imposed flat taxes on travelers and truck drivers in Mushaki, Masisi Province, demanding each traveler pay 10,000 Congolese francs for passage(10). Moreover, their occupation of the villages of Nyakabingo, Kabalikasha, Burongo, and Rushibshi in Masisi territory since November 2023 has severed the traffic between Kitchanga and Goma(11).

### **5. Violations against Aid Workers:**

The violations committed by armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo extend beyond Congolese civilians and also target aid workers and humanitarian actors. Between January and November 2023, over 217 security incidents and private incidents were recorded. In October 2023, threats to humanitarian and relief activities in Oicha resulted in the deprivation of assistance to 100,000 people. The most recent violation in this regard took place on January 4, 2024, when the Codeco militia set fire to a World Food Program vehicle, coming from Tanzania, transporting food supplies for displaced individuals in the Ituri province.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Elizka urges the Commission to encourage the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to establish partnerships with civil society organizations, focusing on enhancing their capacity to collect, monitor, analyze, and document human rights violations, in order to ensure accountability provide remedies for the victims, and develop plans and strategies that align with the country's human rights obligations.
2. Elizka calls on the Commission to enhance technical and cooperative efforts with the Congolese government in launching initiatives and forums dedicated to dialogue and peace with rebel movements in the eastern regions, to achieve a peaceful resolution, dismantle these rebel groups, facilitate their rehabilitation and disarmament, and promote their social integration.
3. Elizka Relief Foundation highlights the importance of providing technical support to the government to establish early warning systems for conflicts and armed clashes within the country's territories. It is crucial to develop proactive and preventive strategies to address these clashes effectively.
4. Elizka Relief Foundation urges the Congolese government to intensify its efforts in strengthening military and security capabilities. This includes increasing training programs and reconnaissance operations, implementing measures to control the illegal flow of arms, and updating security strategies and policies to effectively address rebel movements and mitigate their impact and violations.

5. Elizka Relief Foundation emphasizes the Commission's and the Expert Team's recognition of the need to provide technical and cooperative support to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to ensure a humanitarian and psychological response to victims of violence perpetrated by armed groups, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups such as children and women.
6. Elizka Relief Foundation expresses its hope that the Commission and the team of experts will provide technical and cooperative assistance to the Congolese government. This includes encouraging the establishment of an institutional mechanism dedicated to enhancing the capabilities of the police, judiciary, and security personnel. This mechanism should provide education on human rights obligations and mechanisms for engaging in dialogue with armed movements and emphasize the importance of accountability and judicial remedies in addressing human rights violations.

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- (1) ACUALITE, RDC-ADF: cinq civils décapités au course d'une nouvelle attaque à Matsuko, 10 January 2024. <https://shorter.me/RFQ4i>
  - (2) Radio Okapi, Nord-Kivu : au moins 5 civils tués et 5 autres enlevés par des hommes armés à Masisi et Rutshuru, 5 January 2024, [https://shorter.me/leMJ\\_](https://shorter.me/leMJ_)
  - (3) ACUALITE, Trois civils tués et pillage de produits champêtres par les ADF à Babila Babombi, 31 December 2023, [https://shorter.me/\\_aGV6](https://shorter.me/_aGV6)
  - (4) ACUALITE, Les ADF intensifient les attaques pendant les élections à Beni: au moins 7 civils décapités près de Mamove, 27 December 2023, <https://shorter.me/S3TZe>
  - (5) Aualte, Beni: au moins 14 agriculteurs décapités dans une nouvelle attaque des ADF près de Mamove, 24 November 2023, <https://shorter.me/g3P87>
  - (7) ACUALITE, Beni: au lendemain des affrontements sanglants entre l'armée et un groupe de miliciens, les activités sont paralysées ce mardi à Mangina, 9 January 2023, <https://shorter.me/r95LH>
  - (8) RW, République Démocratique du Congo: Bulletin d'information Spécial du GBV AoR Juillet - Octobre 2023 (Novembre 2023), <https://shorter.me/3AJzD>
  - (10) Radio Okapi, Sud-Kivu : plus de 20 cas de violences sexuelles et celles basées sur le genre documentés en 5 mois, 15 Novmber 2023, <https://shorter.me/9Xkuf>
  - (11) Radio Okapi, Masisi : le M23 occupe les villages Nyakabingu, Kabalekasha, Burungu et Rushebeshe, 6 November 2023, <https://shorter.me/cMSJM>