

# Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Africa's Forgotten Conflict



## Conflict Snapshot:



## Where we are:

Between 1998 and 2003, the Democratic Republic of Congo played host to a devastating civil war, the deadliest conflict in terms of civilian casualties since World War II. Now, even despite the signing of several peace accords, and the presence of the world's largest United Nations peacekeeping force, the violence continues.

Atrocities are committed by both sides, including rape as a weapon of intimidation, forced displacement of thousands and mass killings. A UN-brokered ceasefire signed in January 2008 has been consistently violated by both the Congolese army and ethnic Tutsi rebels led by General Laurent Nkunda. The FDLR, extremist Hutu militia made up of former Rwandan génocidaires, also remain at large in eastern DRC. A resurgence of fighting between the Congolese army and Nkunda's forces beginning in August 2008 has claimed an unknown number of lives and left hundreds of thousands displaced. Experts warn that growing tensions could provoke another regional war.

## How we got here:

Ethnic tensions in eastern DRC arise out of the region's position as a meeting point of the Congolese and Rwandan/Burundian ethnic groups. Interethnic conflicts were historically fought over political power and land rights in the Kivus. A massive influx of refugees into DRC after the 1994 Rwandan genocide exacerbated tensions, leading to two regional wars played out in DRC (1996-1997 and 1998-2003).

Several peace accords have been signed since then, but almost none of them implemented. The current period of conflict in DRC's North Kivu province began in August 2007, when the process of integration Nkunda's forces into the national army broke down.

## Why we care:

STAND: a Student Anti-Genocide Coalition, is uniting students around the world to create a permanent constituency to prevent and stop instances of genocide and mass atrocities wherever they occur. While the current violence in eastern DRC has not been classified as "genocide," it is characterized by intentional targeting of non-combatant civilians on an almost unparalleled scale. Negligence by the international community has allowed eastern DRC to slip back to the brink of all-out war, and has created conditions for a status quo in which rape, killings, displacement, and conflict-related deaths characterize everyday life.

STAND is working towards a world in which the international community protects civilians from this kind of violence and elected officials are held accountable for their action, or inaction, in the face of genocide and mass atrocities. Join the anti-genocide generation. Log onto [www.standnow.org](http://www.standnow.org)

- Over 5.4 million killed in DRC since 1998
- More than 1.3 million people currently displaced from their homes in the east
- Rampant gender-based violence and recruitment of child soldiers

*The Congolese Army (FARDC): composed of poorly trained, frequently unpaid soldiers, and responsible for widespread human rights violations. FARDC has been accused of collaboration with the FDLR, in violation of international agreements signed by the Congolese government.*

*General Nkunda's militia (CNDP): indiscriminately kills, rapes, and severely injures scores of non-combatant civilians, and continues to fight FARDC in violation of a ceasefire agreement. Claiming to defend eastern Congo's Tutsi population, Nkunda is legitimized by the continued presence of the extremist Hutu FDLR.*

*Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR): composed of former Rwandan Hutu militiamen and Interahamwe génocidaires. FDLR forces commit widespread atrocities in Tutsi and non-Hutu majority areas.*

*MONUC: UN mission in the DRC. MONUC is the largest UN peacekeeping operation to date, with over 18,000 troops in the theater.*