

Bombing of the Lac Vert, Lushagala and Mugunga Displacement Camps

West of Goma, North Kivu, DRC

1°38'00"S, 29°09'48"E

1°39'05"S, 29°09'30"E

1°39'50"S, 29°09'15"E

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Incident Date: 3 May 2024

Fatalities: 6-17

Injured: 30-35

Aggressor(s): Rwandan Defence Force/M23 rocket fire

Victim(s) Profile: Displaced civilians, host community members; majority women and children

On the morning of 3 May 2024, explosions struck three sites for internally displaced persons in the Lac Vert, Lushagala, and Mugunga neighbourhoods west of Goma, North Kivu. Human Rights Watch identified the worst-hit location as a site known as 8ème CEPAC, where at least three rockets landed. Casualty figures vary by source and by the point at which each organization's count was taken, ranging from a MONUSCO statement citing "several" dead including six children, to a UN agency figure of at least 12 dead and over 30 injured, to a Human Rights Watch count of at least 17 confirmed dead – including 15 children – and at least 35 injured. Responsibility is disputed between the Congolese government and its international backers, who blame Rwandan and M23 forces, and Rwanda, which denies responsibility and points to FARDC artillery placement near the camps.

UNHCR and UNICEF stated that explosions occurred on the morning of 3 May 2024 at sites designated for civilians in Lac Vert, Lushagala, and Mugunga, killing at least 12 people and injuring more than 30, mainly women and children, and damaging shelters and humanitarian infrastructure. MONUSCO's Special Representative, Bintou Keita, separately condemned the bombing of sites in "Lac-Vert and Mugunga," describing the deaths of several civilians including at least six children. Human Rights Watch's later, more detailed investigation — part of a broader review of five apparently unlawful attacks by Rwandan and M23 forces on displacement camps and populated areas near Goma since January 2024 — confirmed the identities of at least 17 civilians killed, including 15 children, and at least 35 injured, in strikes it attributed to at least three rockets fired into the 8ème CEPAC site specifically. HRW's review found the Congolese army had also placed artillery positions and other military objectives close to the camps, putting civilians at additional risk regardless of who fired the rockets that struck on 3 May.

No party claimed responsibility. The Congolese government, the United States, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which had deployed a peacekeeping force in the region, publicly attributed the attack to the M23 and Rwandan forces. Rwanda's government rejected this attribution in a formal statement, characterizing the US position as premature and unsubstantiated, and stated that warnings about FARDC placing heavy artillery within IDP camps had previously been issued by humanitarian organizations, including Médecins Sans Frontières. The National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO) condemned the bombing without assigning blame to a specific party.

References

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