

Kishishe Massacre: M23 Atrocities and Mass Graves in North Kivu (November 2022)

North Kivu, DRC

1°11'02.1"S 29°27'12.0"E

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Incident Date: November 21-30, 2022

Fatalities: 171+

Injured: UNK

Aggressor(s): March 23
Movement

Victim(s) Profile: Congolese allies

Between 21 and 30 November 2022, fighters of the March 23 Movement (M23) carried out a multi-day massacre in the village of Kishishe, North Kivu, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The killings followed clashes between M23 and local defense militias allied with the Congolese army; M23 combatants conducted house-to-house searches of the village, executing men and boys identified as army ‘supporters,’ and subsequently raped and sexually assaulted women and girls once organized resistance had been eliminated. Named, confirmed fatalities are placed at 171, with a minimum of 66 women and children reported as victims of rape; the United Nations and the Congolese government dispute the final totals. Suspected mass grave sites have since been identified in and around the village, and the attack contributed to significant displacement into camps such as Rusayo, elsewhere in North Kivu. The sections below set out the background to the attack, the incident itself, and the supporting satellite and photographic evidence.

The perpetrating force has been identified as fighters of the March 23 Movement (M23), a rebel group operating in North Kivu and reported to be backed by Rwandan officials (Human Rights Watch, 2023). M23 has represented its objectives as the defense of Tutsi communities against Hutu-aligned militant factions, while simultaneously rejecting the

legitimacy of the current Congolese government and calling for its removal (Britannica, 2025).

The November 2022 attacks arose from an escalating rivalry between M23 fighters and local defense militias organized to protect their villages from incursion. The principal opposing force (and consequently the primary target population of this attack) maintained direct alliance with the Congolese national army, and were accordingly designated 'supporters' of the Congolese government by M23 combatants.



An aerial view of Kishishe, 1°01'46.5"S 29°13'07.9"E 10/02/2024 (Google Earth)

The attack was concentrated within the village of Kishishe (Figure 1). M23 combatants conducted a systematic, house-to-house search of the settlement, executing men and boys identified as 'supporters,' including individuals of fighting age. Following these killings, fighters turned to the wives and daughters of the deceased, subjecting them to rape and sexual assault, with organized resistance within the village having by that point been eliminated. One eyewitness identified the Adventist church as the site of the

attack's most severe concentration of casualties, recalling more than 80 bodies within the building (WeAfrica24, 2023).

Final casualty figures remain disputed between the United Nations and the Congolese government. Named, confirmed fatalities are placed at 171 individuals (Amnesty International, 2023), with a minimum of 66 women and children reported as victims of rape (WeAfrica24, 2023).

Beyond its immediate and devastating toll on the residents of Kishishe, the attack contributed to displacement pressures felt across the wider DRC, as affected families relocated in response to sustained insecurity. Figure 4 documents the growth of displacement camps attributable to rebel activity, including the November 2022 Kishishe attack (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Figures 2 and 3 present detailed aerial views of Rusayo Displacement Camp, one of several such sites established in the region.



An aerial view of Rusayo displacement camps, 2.6km North of the city of Keshero.
(Google, 2025)



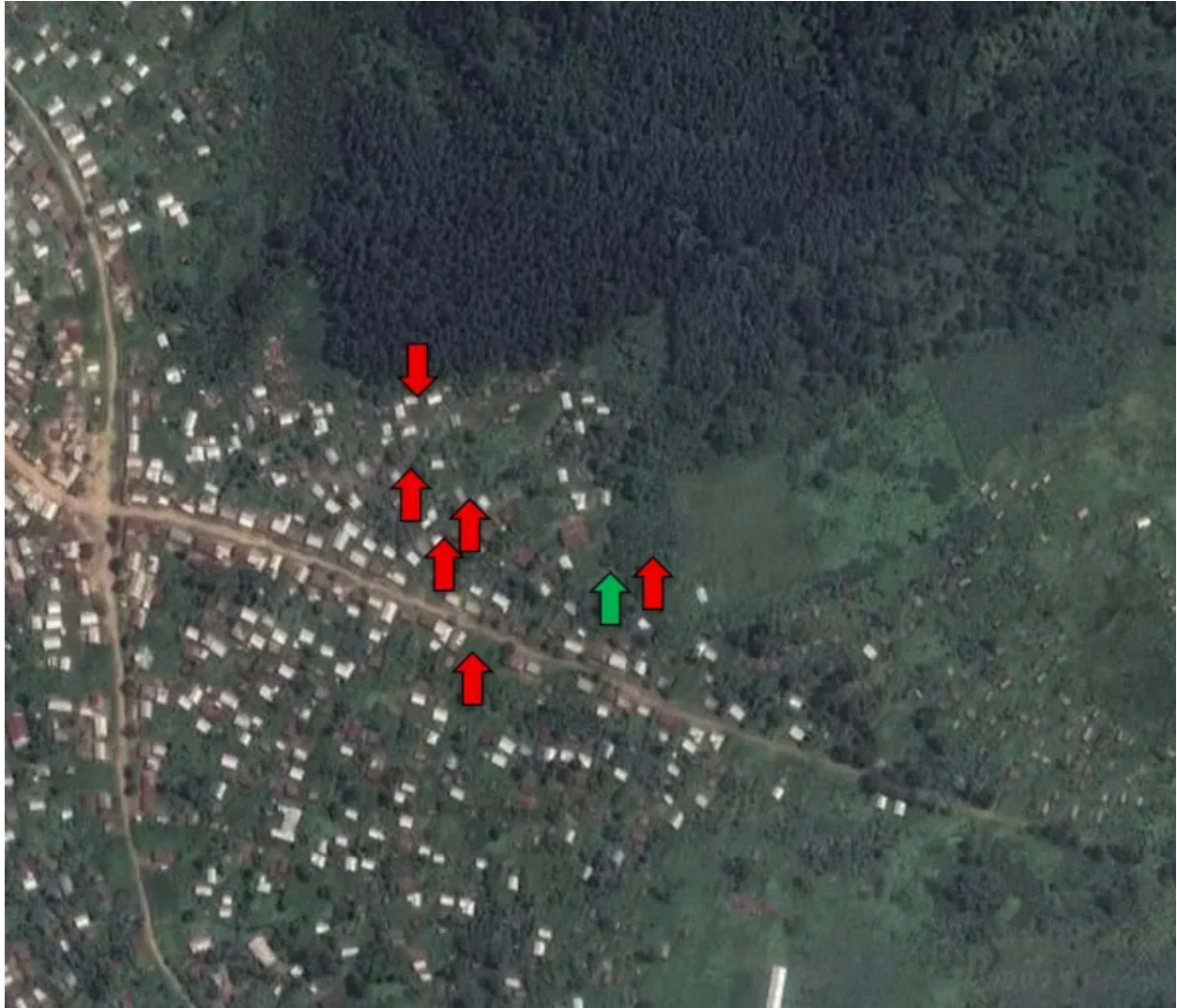
Closer aerial view of Rusayo displacement camps (Google 2025)



Displacement camps grown and created due to rebel attacks in North Kivu, DRC
(Human Rights Watch, 2023)



Two men pictured pointing at one of the many gravesites inside the village. This image captured nearby the Adventist Church. (Human Rights Watch, 2024)



Suspected locations of mass grave sites marked in the red arrow (Human Rights Watch, 2024), figure X captured relative to the green arrow. 10/02/2024 (Google Earth)

References

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