

Reprisal Killings at Bukombo: M23 Executions Following Militia Clashes, 16 July 2023

Bwito Chiefdom, Rutshuru Territory, North Kivu, DRC

1°19'39.46"S 28°46'21.39"E

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Incident Date: 16 July 2023

Fatalities: 11-12

Injured: UNK

Aggressor(s): March 23
Movement (M23)

Victim(s) Profile: Congolese civilians, men
forcibly conscripted

On 16 July 2023, the bodies of civilian men were discovered in Bukombo village, in the Bwito Chiefdom of Rutshuru Territory, following the withdrawal of M23 fighters after clashes with local self-defense militias in the surrounding villages of Muhanga, Kavumu, and Sisa. Some victims had been shot, others killed with knives; at least one account describes the bodies as decapitated. Civilians displaced by the fighting fled toward Nyanzale, Katsiru, and Mashango.

Clashes broke out in the days preceding 16 July 2023 between M23 fighters and local self-defense militias (referred to in regional reporting as Wazalendo) in villages surrounding Bukombo, including Muhanga, Kavumu, and Sisa. As the fighting subsided and M23 fighters withdrew from the area, they reportedly forced captured civilians to carry looted food and weapons. On reaching Bukombo's center, the fighters killed those they had conscripted as porters. A resident who reached the scene that Sunday described eleven corpses, some killed by gunfire and others with knives, and stated that none of the dead were combatants. A Wazalendo civil society source put the toll at twelve, and was

quoted stating that the fighters killed the civilians “as soon as” they reached Bukombo's center. Separate local reporting from the same week describes M23 fighters killing residents and burning the shelters of returnees in Kashavu village, within the same Bukombo groupement, and further clashes in the neighboring Tongo groupement in which M23 killed at least ten people days earlier in apparent reprisal for ambushes by local militia fighters.

Location: the killings took place in Bukombo village/center itself, approximately 100 km north of Goma. Rubona Hill is treated separately here as a body-disposal site associated with the wider Bukombo corridor, not as the site of this particular killing.

Geolocation: no independently sourced GPS coordinates for the specific killing site within Bukombo center were identified in this review; the groupement is described as roughly 16 km (10 miles) east of Kitchanga along the RP1030 road.

References

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