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M23 REBELLION

A FURTHER CHAPTER IN THE VIOLENCE IN EASTERN CONGO

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In recent years, the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have once again become the epicentre of various conflicts in the African Great Lakes Region. The two provinces and their population of ten million were affected particularly strongly by the three Congo Wars between 1996 and 2006. For years they have been the scene of looting, indiscriminate killing and other crimes committed by various parties to the conflict. The region is very densely populated and rich in mineral resources. The reserves of gold, diamonds, tin, coltan¹ and other raw materials are worth hundreds of billions of euros.

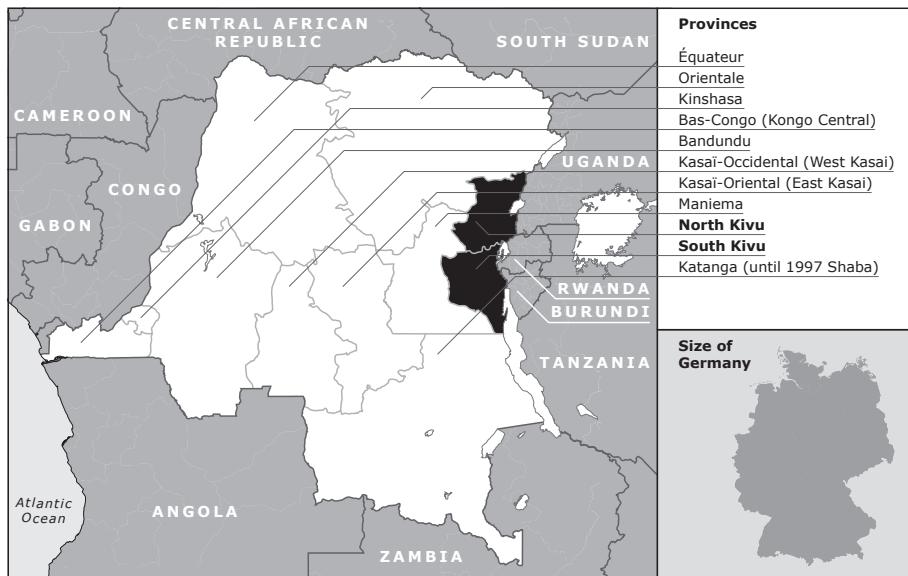
In April 2012, the M23 Rebellion² began with the mutiny of 600 Congolese soldiers, bringing a new wave of violence and destruction to the region. Many women, children and men fell victim to the conflict and over 900,000 people had to flee their homes yet again. Nobody knows the precise figures because many are left to their own devices and have hardly any access to assistance. The fighting has now stopped, but the insecurity of not knowing whether a new conflict may break out remains. Various national and international actors have analysed the events during the past few months and discussed solutions for a lasting peace.

1 | Coltan is an ore, which is mainly processed to extract the metal tantalum. Tantalum is used in capacitors for laptops and mobile phones.

2 | M23 stands for 23 March 2009, the date of a peace agreement between the Congolese government and rebel groups, which has since failed.

Fig. 1

Provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and conflict regions North and South Kivu



HOW THE M23 REBELLION CAME INTO BEING

The brutal killing of over 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus within a few weeks in 1994 in the neighbouring state of Rwanda was a dramatic event. This genocide has been affecting the entire region ever since. It is also considered the origin of the M23 Rebellion.

The genocide was stopped by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (Front Populaire Rwandais, FPR), which is dominated by Tutsis.³ The FPR quickly took control of the country. Fearing reprisals, over two million Hutus subsequently fled to neighbouring (then) Zaire. These included approximately 25,000 armed Hutu militia members, who bore partial responsibility for the genocide in Rwanda and now threatened the Tutsi population in Zaire.

3 | The Rwandan Patriotic Front (FPR) was founded in Uganda in 1985 by descendants of Rwandan Tutsis. Between 1990 and 1994, the FPR conducted a guerrilla war against the Hutu dominated Rwandan army. From the military bases in southern Uganda, the militias attacked targets in northern Rwanda, successfully in most cases.

As the longtime (Zairian) dictator Mobutu Sese Seko supported the Hutu militias, the new Rwandan FPR government sent its own militias to Zaire and armed the Tutsis living there. During the subsequent twelve years, a total of three devastating wars took place in the region, one of which also involved the Hutu/Tutsi issue in the Congo.⁴ It was particularly the areas in eastern Congo on the border to Rwanda that bore the brunt of these conflicts.

In the Third Congo War⁵ from 2006 to 2009, the Congolese government fought against the rebel movement Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP). The CNDP was supported by the Rwandan government, particularly in the fight against the Hutu militia Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR). Further CNDP objectives included the overthrow of the Congolese government and, according to local experts, also the realisation of Rwanda's economic interests in the eastern region of the Congo, which is rich in mineral resources. The war ended with the rebels suddenly giving up after internal power struggles had weakened then CNDP noticeably.

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On 5 January 2009, the high-ranking military leader of the CNDP Bosco Ntaganda⁶ announced that the former head of the CNDP, Laurent Nkunda, had been deposed. Ntaganda offered a truce and began negotiations with the Congolese government. In the ceasefire agreement between the two parties to the conflict, it was agreed that 6,200 CNDP rebels would be integrated into the regular Congolese armed forces Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC).⁷

4 | After Laurent Kabila had toppled the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, Zaire was renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1997. The Congo and DR Congo are used as alternative names in this document. This is not to be confused with the Republic of the Congo or Congo-Brazzaville.

5 | The Third Congo War is also referred to as the Kivu War.

6 | Bosco Ntaganda, who is called the "Terminator" by his followers, has been pursued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) as a war criminal since 2006. The indictment relates to the recruitment and deployment of child soldiers.

7 | Ceasefire agreement of 16 Jan 2009. Besides the CNDP, members of 20 further militias were also integrated into the FARDC.

The two CNDP signatories, Bosco Ntaganda and Sultani Makenga, were made high-ranking generals within the Congolese military. However, they set up a parallel structure within the armed forces. Over the following months, the former CNDP rebels were deployed mainly to combat the Hutu militias (FDLR) in the DR Congo. This army operation was named Amani Leo. Following on from the ceasefire agreement, a peace agreement between the Congolese government and the CNDP was concluded in the provincial capital of Goma on 23 March 2009. Amongst others things, it was agreed that the CNDP would be approved as a political party, that political prisoners would be released and further political and economic measures of reconciliation would be expedited. In addition, the Congo government was to reform its army and democratise local government.⁸

However, apart from the sluggish integration of the CNDP rebels into the army, the Congolese government did not demonstrate much interest in implementing the agreed measures. In the 2011 national parliamentary elections, the CNDP party competed as a partner within the party alliance around President Joseph Kabil. The party has made little impact in public since it was founded. In spite of the Kabil party alliance winning the elections, it has achieved little in Congolese politics. The previously mentioned parallel CNDP structure within the Congolese military became increasingly powerful in the eastern Kivu provinces and was involved in the smuggling of gold and other raw materials. From 2012 onwards, the Congolese government tried to dismantle it step by step. To this end, the military mission Amani Leo, whose purpose had been to combat the FDLR militia, was terminated.

In April 2012, President Kabil announced that he would assist the international community in its efforts to arrest the indicted war criminal General Bosco Ntaganda. In response, the two CNDP signatories Ntaganda and Makenga, now FARDC generals, mutinied with the support of approximately 600 soldiers. The movement, which comprised mostly former CNDP rebels, called itself M23 after the date of the peace agreement of 23 March 2009, which had now failed.

8 | The agreement was also signed by former President Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria) and by Benjamin William Mkapa (Tanzania) at the time.

BEGINNING OF THE M23 REBELLION

Demands of M23 for greater economic development in the Kivu provinces found favour with the impoverished local population.

During the first few weeks, the M23 rebels were able to relatively quickly gain control of the Congolese areas near the borders with Uganda and Rwanda. This was due to the fact that M23 had a more efficient military setup and made strategic alliances with other rebel groups and because the rebellion was initially welcomed by the population. In spite of many promises and agreements, the government in Kinshasa had badly neglected the situation of the local population prior to that time and allowed criminal smuggling networks to operate freely. Some members of the government lined their pockets in the process. The demands of M23 for greater economic development in the Kivu provinces therefore found favour with the impoverished local population.

Following the example of other rebel groups, M23 set up its own government and financial system. In July 2012, Jean-Marie Runiga, who had previously coordinated the political activities of the CNDP, became head of the political wing. Runiga, a high-ranking member of a church of the awakening in Congo, formed a cabinet and arranged press conferences. Important sources of revenue included the occupied mines as well as tolls levied on roads and at border crossings to the neighbouring state of Uganda. Taxes were raised as well, but villages were also pillaged. M23 also raised funds from entry fees that foreign tourists had to pay in the occupied national parks.

Although the M23 rebellion did not reach anything like the numbers of its predecessor organisation the CNDP⁹, it was able to capture large areas in the North Kivu province and stand up to the Congolese army. In July 2012, the Congolese government concluded a truce with the M23 rebels. It was at this time that an expert report of the United Nations was published, which proved that Rwanda had supported

9 | The National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP) commanded over 6,000 to 8,000 men. According to estimates by MONUSCO, the M23 rebellion had around 600 men in May 2012 and 2,000 in November 2012.

the M23 rebels with logistics, equipment and even troops.¹⁰ The report explains that the M23 leaders had received direct instructions from Rwanda. The investigations focused on the Rwandan Defence Minister James Kabarebe, who had fought alongside Kabila against Mobutu in the 1990s. Besides economic interests, the Kivu provinces represent an important buffer zone for Rwanda in its efforts to protect itself against Hutu militias. The Rwandan government rejected these allegations vehemently.



M23 rebels in July 2012 in Bunagana. | Source: Peter Greste, Al Jazeera English (CC BY-SA).

A further accusation in the expert report was directed against Gabriel Amisi, General and Chief of Staff of the army. He was said to be acting as an arms dealer, who supplied various rebel groups from stocks of the Congolese army FARDC and had profiteered for a long time from the mines in the east of the country. He allegedly also supplied the M23 with arms and munitions. Because of these allegations, President Joseph Kabila suspended General Amisi on 22 November 2012.

10 | The final report was published in the letter by the Chairman of the UN Security Council. UN Security Council, "Letter dated 12 November 2012 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council", S/2012/843, 15 Nov 2012, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2012/843 (accessed 12 Apr 2013).

CAPTURE OF THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF GOMA

In spite of the truce, the fighting intensified again in the autumn of 2012. The M23 rebels were no longer able to maintain their stronghold on the region of Masisi in the north of North Kivu province, which is rich in mineral resources, and Uganda blocked a border crossing that had previously been an important source of income for M23. It became obvious that the rebels would march on the provincial capital of Goma. The city with a population of a million lies directly on the Rwandan border and is the government and administrative centre of the province of North Kivu as well as an important trading centre.

By 18 November, M23 forces had advanced to within a few kilometres of Goma. During the initial fighting, the rebels suffered high losses. The gaps were filled by

Efforts were made to attract former rebels and the numerous deserters with a monthly salary of approximately 150 U.S. dollars. But there was also some forced recruitment, including that of children and adolescents.

recruiting people from the occupied areas. Particular efforts were made to attract former rebels and the numerous deserters with a monthly salary of approximately 150 U.S. dollars. Some followed M23 voluntarily. But

there was also some forced recruitment, including that of children and adolescents.¹¹ The frontline FARDC positions were breached one by one and some city districts were taken. On 20 November, the entire city fell into the hands of the M23 rebels.

Human Rights Watch reports about 24 murders committed by M23, 21 of whom were civilian victims.¹² The rebels specifically targeted employees of the government and justice system. According to reports by Goma residents, civilians were wounded and many houses were ransacked or destroyed, including administrative and police buildings. Many people sought protection in refugee camps, which soon became overcrowded. As the Congolese army had

¹¹ | In a report of 11 Sep 2012, the U.S. NGO Human Rights Watch illustrated the brutal recruiting methods of M23. "DR Congo: M23 Rebels Committing War Crimes", Human Rights Watch, 11 Sep 2012, <http://hrw.org/news/2012/09/11/dr-congo-m23-rebels-committing-war-crimes> (accessed 14 Apr 2013).

¹² | "DR Congo: War Crimes by M23, Congolese Army", Human Rights Watch, 5 Feb 2013, <http://hrw.org/news/2013/02/05/dr-congo-war-crimes-m23-congolese-army> (accessed 12 Apr 2013).

destroyed the electricity supply to the water treatment plants, there were problems with the drinking water supply.



Families on the move to escape the current fighting between M23 rebels and the Congolese army. Refugee camps were soon over-crowded. | Source: Kate Holt, Oxfam (CC BY-NC-ND).

It is difficult to understand why both the Kinshasa government and the military leadership had underestimated the M23 rebellion for such a long time and how it was possible that a few hundred rebels were able to take a town with a population of a million within a few days. According to local experts, a number of poor military decisions were taken in addition to ignoring the lack of strength of the FARDC units stationed in Goma. Although some 1,500 soldiers of the UN peacekeeping mission MONUSCO¹³ were stationed in Goma when the rebels entered the city, they could not intervene in the conflict because of their mandate. At the time, their mandate, which had been determined in a resolution of the UN Security Council, was restricted to the protection of the civilian population and cooperation with the Congolese military forces FARDC. Once it became clear that the take-over of the city by M23 was imminent, the FARDC soldiers

13 | The peacekeeping mission MONUSCO (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) has been active in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since November 1999. The currently largest peace-keeping mission comprises close to 20,000 men and women. The majority are soldiers from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Uruguay and South Africa. In addition, there are some 300 police and 2,000 civilian experts. The annual budget of the mission is approx. 1.4 billion U.S. dollars.

fled and abandoned MONUSCO and the civilian population. MONUSCO was only able to conduct a few emergency operations to evacuate important Congolese government representatives. According to an assessment by the UN, further military intervention would only have cost more lives.

THE CRIMES COMMITTED BY THE CONGOLESE ARMY IN MINOVA

During the course of its retreat from the city of Goma, FARDC committed some of the worst atrocities in this conflict in the town of Minova. Minova is not far from Goma and was on FARDC's retreat path. During the retreat, the FARDC command structures broke down, some units disappeared for days and soldiers began looting. According to a MONUSCO report, a total of 126 cases of rape and two murders committed by the Congolese army in Minova were

registered between 20 and 30 November.

During the retreat of the FARDC from Minova some units disappeared for days and soldiers began looting. A total of 126 cases of rape and two murders committed by the FARDC were registered.

One of the Congolese soldiers involved in the action described what happened in Minova in the British newspaper *The Guardian*:

"Twenty-five of us gathered together and said we should rape 10 women each, and we did it, [...] I've raped 53 women. And children of five or six years old."¹⁴ It was not until the head of the Congolese army, Lieutenant General François Olenga, who had been appointed to the post very recently, and the military police took action that the assaults could be stopped.

Immediately afterwards, nine soldiers were arrested. Just two of them were arrested because of claims of rape, seven further soldiers were accused of looting. But apart from a half-hearted investigation of the events and empty promises, neither FARDC nor the Congolese government have taken any action to find those responsible for the crimes. Both the local population and the international community responded to this behaviour with outrage.

14 | Pete Jones, "Congo: We did whatever we wanted, says soldier who raped 53 women", *The Guardian*, 11 Apr 2013, <http://guardian.co.uk/world/2013/apr/11/congo-rapes-g8-soldier> (accessed 22 Apr 2013).

Raping women, children and in some cases men as well is frequently used as a weapon of war in order to do permanent physical and psychological damage to the enemy. But the example in Minova has also shown that even members of the perpetrators' own side can fall victim to rape. In the Congo, there is a widespread superstition amongst rebels and soldiers that having sexual intercourse with minors provides protection against being shot or contracting HIV. A number of national and international initiatives have been set up in the meantime to call attention to the problems. A few months after the incident, the actress Angelina Jolie and the British Foreign Secretary William Hague visited the area of conflict to gain a picture of the situation of women there. Hague pointed out that over 500,000 women had been raped since 1996. He added that the fact that only a very small proportion of the perpetrators had been brought to court only encouraged the culture of lawlessness.¹⁵

M23 WITHDRAWAL

On 1 December 2012, the M23 rebels left Goma and took up position approximately 20 kilometres north of the city. This was followed by negotiations with the Congolese government in the Ugandan capital of Kampala. The M23 rebels' demands related predominantly to the fulfilment of the terms of the agreement of 23 March 2009. In addition, the M23 delegation demanded better protection of the political opposition as well as proper investigation of the murders of opposition figures in the Congo, the release of political prisoners, the disbandment of the National Electoral Commission CENI as well as the convening of a new national assembly. The Congolese government, which was initially reluctant in its participation in the negotiations, demanded the disbandment of M23 and sought clarity about the role Rwanda had played in the conflict.

The M23 rebels' demands related predominantly to the fulfilment of the terms of the agreement of 23 March 2009. In addition, the delegation demanded better protection of the political opposition.

15 | William Hague, "William Hague Reflects on Preventing Sexual Violence – An Op-ed by Foreign Secretary William Hague", 11 Apr 2013, <http://gov.uk/government/world-location-news/william-hague-reflects-on-preventing-sexual-violence> (accessed 15 Apr 2013).

The negotiations were still continuing in April 2013. Although initial agreements had been reached, lasting solutions are not yet in sight. The Congolese side is playing for time to see how long M23 will continue to exist. In the meantime, the delegations have reduced in size as funds are dwindling.

At the same time, discussions between the states of the region have started as well within the African Union and at the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR¹⁶). The conflict with M23 has a definite regional component and there was a danger that the fighting might spread to the neighbouring countries of Rwanda and Uganda. In terms of content, the aim of the international conferences was to put a final end to the conflicts in the eastern DR Congo and to establish a dialogue between the affected states. As early as in the autumn of 2012, discussions were held on the idea of sending an international intervention force into the Kivu provinces. This intervention force, consisting of troops from the neighbouring states, was to disarm the rebel groups. But due to a lack of will on the part of the states, this initially remained on the drawing board.

On 24 February 2013, representatives from eleven ICGLR states met in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa and concluded a Framework for Peace, Security, and Cooperation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.¹⁷ Amongst other things, the signatory states declared that they would no longer interfere in conflicts in neighbouring states without prior consultation. The Congolese government, for its part, agreed to conduct important reforms in the areas of security, decentralisation, infrastructure development and improvement of the supply of basic services. Now, it is above all strategies and activities that are needed

16 | The ICGLR member states are Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. ICGLR website, <http://cirlg.org/index.php> (accessed 18 Apr 2013); Charlotte Heyl, "The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region – An African CSCE?", *KAS International Reports*, 12/2010, 87 et seqq., http://kas.de/wf/doc/kas_21242-544-2-30.pdf (accessed 12 Apr 2013).

17 | The agreement was also approved by representatives of the United Nations, the African Union, the ICGLR and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

to fill the agreement with substance. The signatories meet twice a year to discuss progress. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon spoke of a historic moment and stated that the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo needed to remain on the international agenda.

No M23 representatives were invited to these meetings. In February 2013, infighting began between the two M23 leaders Makenga and Ntaganda. On 18 March, Ntaganda fled into the U.S. embassy in Kigali, ready to face justice at the International Criminal Court. His rival Makenga took over leadership of the rebels and is now negotiating with the Congolese government in Kampala. At the same time, pressure is mounting on Rwanda to stop supporting M23. Due to the allegations, the USA, the UK, Sweden, the Netherlands and Germany partly suspended their development cooperation with Rwanda in July and, respectively, August or delayed payments.

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STARTING POINTS FOR A LONG-TERM SOLUTION

There have been some indications of progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the last ten years. Since the end of the Third Congo War, the western and central parts of the country have been relatively stable. There have already been two elections, and a pluralistic party system as well as relatively free media have emerged. Excessive inflation has been stopped and the Congo is showing good economic growth. But since 2009, the Congolese government has not been able to bring about lasting peace in the east of the country. The fall of Goma and the events of the M23 Rebellion have shown that the Congolese population is dissatisfied with this situation. There have been reports on the matter in the newspapers in Kinshasa virtually every day. And opposition representatives have also been speaking openly against government policies in parliament and in the senate.

The framework agreement of 24 February has highlighted the importance of reforms in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The security sector and decentralisation are particularly important in this context. The panicked retreat from Goma and the incidents in Minova have shown

that the Congolese army also urgently needs reforming. Experts assume that the FARDC comprises more than 120,000 soldiers and civilian labour. Thus it has one of the highest force levels in sub-Saharan Africa. During the M23 conflict, the dilapidated FARDC was in no state to take effective action against the well organised rebel groups. Many M23 rebels came from the ranks of the FARDC, but were still superior to their former comrades. The weekly magazine *Jeune Afrique* posed the blunt question "Why are the African armies so useless?"¹⁸, referring to the defeats of the Malian and Congolese armies in 2012. According to local experts, dissatisfaction within the army is very high. That might have a considerable impact on the security situation in the country.

Also urgently required are structural reforms to create an army that will act in the interests of the constitution and of the nation and not in the interests of individual actors. There is a need to eradicate problems such as parallel or incompetent command structures, training deficits, poor equipment and logistics, endemic corruption, delayed pay and lack of motivation. Although President Kabila announced important reforms for 2013 at the end of last year, he has provided no further details to date. MONUSCO, the EU, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and other organisations are collaborating on reforms with FARDC and with Congolese civil society. The KAS Country Programme Congo has been supporting the democratisation of the FARDC through political education for several years. It conducts seminars on democracy and the rule of law for officers in cooperation with the FARDC.

There have been demands for democratically legitimised and functioning local institutions to be established for a long time. But due to political rivalries, lack of motivation and funding there has been no visible progress.

The second area requiring reform is that of the decentralisation of state and administration in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There have been demands for democratically legitimised and functioning local institutions to be established for a long time and they are already enshrined in the constitution. But due to political rivalries, lack of motivation and funding there has been no visible progress in this area. Many local government

18 | François Soudan, "Armées Africaines: Pourquoi sont-elles si nulles?", *Jeune Afrique*, 17 Dec 2012, http://jeuneafrique.com/Article/JA2709p026_033.xml0 (accessed 13 May 2013).

institutions are inefficient in their operation, have few funds, are corrupt and do not offer adequate services. In some parts of the country, state administration does not function at all or it has been replaced by informal structures. Successful decentralisation could be a way to reduce some of the considerable potential for conflict at local level. In other countries, where decentralisation processes have been conducted successfully, it has become clear that it is easier to integrate minorities, distribute resources and encourage citizens to take on more responsibility at a local level. In the DR Congo, there are still a number of projects that need to be tackled urgently. But there are also a few actions taken at international level that may help end the violence.

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To curb the illegal trade in raw materials, the United States passed a law in 2010 as part of its Wall Street reforms, which requires quoted companies to disclose whether their products have been manufactured using metals from areas of conflict. The European Union is currently making efforts to push through a similar directive. The United Nations, individual states and civil society organisations are putting increasing pressure on armies and rebels who subject women to violence. On 25 March 2013, for instance, the special envoy of the UN mission in the Congo, Roger Meece, presented the Congolese government with a seven-day ultimatum relating to the events in Minova: Either FARDC would conduct serious investigations culminating in the conviction of the guilty parties or the support by MONUSCO for the two affected FARDC battalions in the region would be stopped. On the basis of the allegations, at least ten responsible commanding officers were dismissed and handed over to the military jurisdiction. How many more soldiers and officers will be charged is not yet known.

On 18 October 2012, Rwanda was elected a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for two years. Western governments partly resumed their development cooperation with Rwanda, which had previously been suspended, for several months, albeit subject to conditions. On 28 March 2013, the United Nations approved a new, far-reaching mandate for the MONUSCO peacekeeping

mission in the Congo in Resolution 2098 (2013).¹⁹ Not only has the mandate been extended by one year, its remit has also been significantly expanded. For the first time, the UN is sending in a 3,000 strong intervention force, which has the remit to neutralise and disarm armed rebel groups in the east of the country. This means that the United Nations is abandoning its principle of neutrality and actively intervening in the hostilities. According to the mandate, cooperation with the Congolese armed forces is not an absolute necessity. But experts agree that collaboration with the police and the judicial authorities should begin as soon as possible so that war criminals can be brought to justice.

The Congolese government is playing for time in the current negotiations with M23 in the hope that the rebellion will continue to disintegrate or that the intervention force will disarm M23.

Hopes are high among the Congolese population that the UN intervention force will bring about a swift resolution of the conflict. The Congolese government is playing for time in the current negotiations with M23 in the hope that the rebellion will continue to disintegrate or that the intervention force will disarm M23. But some security experts are starting to have doubts in the intervention force, and memories of failed missions of the past, namely ONUC (1960s in the Congo) and Restore Hope (early 1990s in Somalia), are resurfacing. Neither of these two missions was neutral either and they both became a pawn of different political interests. The mission is also short of time, the relevant troops need to be transferred to the Congo and gain experience in the field.

CONCLUSION

The fighting has stopped, but the danger is not over by any means. The likelihood that a new rebel movement will emerge, intent on profiting from the raw materials, is high. No fewer than eight states have intervened militarily in the Congo in the past 20 years. Over 20 militia groups conducted their malign activities; many of them continue doing so today. After almost 20 years of war and destruction, peace will not come to the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo overnight.

19 | Resolution 2098 (2013), UN Security Council, S/RES/2098 (2013), 28 Mar 2013, http://securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF%7D/s_res_2098.pdf (accessed 13 Apr 2013).

However, some developments give cause for hope. One Congolese war criminal has already been convicted by the International Criminal Court in The Hague, another has handed himself in. M23 has been weakened, not least due to international pressure, and the United Nations has created a framework agreement with its African partners, which can contribute to a lasting solution in the region. In a speech about the new strategy, the UN General Secretary said: "The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo deserve to live normal lives and not to be subject to rape, abduction, exactions, fear or worse. [...] Let us offer the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo not only hope, but a concrete engagement for the peace and stability they have so long deserved."²⁰

The regional framework agreement and the new intervention force of the UN mission represent important initiatives to stabilise the region. But their effectiveness depends above all on the extent to which the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo implements necessary reforms in the country.

20 | Minutes of the 6928th session of the UN Security Council, S/PV.6928, 5 Mar 2013, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PV.6928 (accessed 13 Apr 2013).