

## Urgent Action Needed to Protect Civilians in North and South Kivu

**NP calls on the international community to urgently prioritise and negotiate the protection of civilians in North and South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Bukavu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1 February 2025 — **Amid rapidly escalating violence against civilians, Nonviolent Peaceforce is deeply concerned for the welfare of people in the North and South Kivu regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). We call on national, regional and international stakeholders to urgently prioritise the protection of civilians, a negotiated end to violence, and ensure that international humanitarian laws are upheld. We need to ensure that we are able to facilitate a humanitarian and political response to the crisis immediately.**

“Civilians are terrified, dropping everything to leave their homes for safer areas of Congo and across borders. For many, this is the last in a long string of displacements and they are exhausted. Others can’t move at all, stuck amid violence without documents or resources to leave. Whether they stay or go, there is no guarantee of safety anywhere.” - Christian Cirhigiri, Advocacy and Programme Development Manager for NP in DRC.

As violence intensifies through major population centres in Goma, Kalehe, Minova and toward Bukavu, civilians continue to bear the heaviest burden. Fighting has caused mass displacement, overwhelming internal displacement camps, particularly in Goma, where humanitarian access is now cut off. As protection responders themselves evacuate or shelter in place, protection efforts are being disrupted, leaving people exposed to further violence and harm.

This situation is especially worrying for women who have been displaced. NP and our partners continue to receive reports of sexual violence and harassment in camps in South Kivu, alongside growing threats to human rights defenders and journalists. Reports of forced child recruitment into the ranks of armed groups are also deeply alarming.

Despite a narrowing window of opportunity to arrest these harms, there are still urgent actions the international community can take today. We urge immediate and decisive action and support from regional and international actors, including:

- The immediate negotiation and implementation of safe passage routes for civilians from North and South Kivu to safer areas,
- Guaranteed safe access for humanitarian responders to reach displaced and risk-exposed communities, including the facilitation of humanitarian aid to all affected areas;
- Strong pressure on all parties to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law and to secure an immediate ceasefire.

NP has had a presence in South Kivu and works alongside communities, local civil society, and actors committed to civilian protection. NP stands ready to support communities in strengthening their own safety and resilience through nonviolent means.

Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) is an international civilian protection agency. Our mission is to protect civilians in violent conflicts through unarmed strategies, build peace side-by-side with local communities, and advocate for the wider adoption of these approaches to safeguard human lives and dignity. NP's duty of care programming aims to reduce the physical risks volunteers are exposed to as well as support the psychological resilience of volunteer networks and the communities they serve.

## Contact

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