

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Intercommunal violence and clashes between non-state armed groups and the military resulted in attacks on schools, students, and education personnel in the Democratic Republic of Congo, both in historically affected areas and new areas, such as Mai-Ndombe province. Attacks on higher education in the form of repression and excessive use of force by law enforcement also occurred during this period.

Context

Between 2017 and 2019, central and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) continued to witness conflict between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) and non-state armed groups, which Human Rights Watch estimated to number over 140 in 2018.⁶⁹⁵

ACLED observed a sharp upswing in political violence in 2018, in part due to presidential elections and the Ebola outbreak, calling the year one of the most violent in recent history.⁶⁹⁶ Violent events continued to increase in the first half of 2019, according to ACLED.⁶⁹⁷ Between June 2017 and June 2019, the Kivu Security Tracker recorded 3,015 violent incidents that harmed or killed over 6,500 civilians in North and South Kivu provinces (collectively referred to as ‘the Kivus’).⁶⁹⁸ While the Greater Kasai region saw a significant decrease in conflict from late 2017 through 2018, the Kivus, Ituri, and Tanganyika provinces remained particularly volatile.⁶⁹⁹ In the Kivus and Ituri, conflict developed into a complex emergency with the outbreak of the Ebola virus in 2018; the Ministry of Health had confirmed 3,253 cases as of December 25, 2019.⁷⁰⁰

The UN estimated that there were over five million internally displaced people in DRC in 2019, making it the country with the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Africa. According to the UN, 15.6 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance in 2019, 59 percent of whom were children.⁷⁰¹ In 2019, renewed violence in Ituri province caused the displacement of over 360,000 people in June,⁷⁰² and in Masisi, North Kivu province, the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) reported that over 265,000 were newly displaced in August due to conflict.⁷⁰³

In 2018, the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) reported that 1,053 human rights violations occurred, with 53 percent perpetrated by the FARDC and 47 percent by other armed groups.⁷⁰⁴ Non-state armed groups, FARDC, and the national police force systematically used sexual violence as a weapon of war, particularly in conflicts in North Kivu, South Kivu, Tanganyika and Ituri provinces, and the Greater Kasai region, according to the UN Security Council.⁷⁰⁵ With regard to child recruitment, the Child Protection Sub-Cluster identified at least 7,200 children associated with armed groups in 2018.⁷⁰⁶

The conflict in DRC impacted heavily on education. The UN estimated that violence prevented at least 150,000 children in the Greater Kasai region from attending school in 2017, and damaged over 600 school buildings.⁷⁰⁷ In October 2019, conflict-related destruction or occupation of schools or child protection facilities affected over 19,600 students in Ituri province.⁷⁰⁸ According to the DRC Education Cluster, only 36 percent of displaced children were enrolled in school in 2018, as compared to the national average of 78 percent.⁷⁰⁹

Attacks on schools

Between 2017 and 2019, GCPEA collected over 1,000 reported attacks on schools in DRC. In 2016 and 2017, a significant spike in attacks on schools in DRC occurred, primarily due to the outbreak of conflict in the Greater Kasai region in late 2016. In 2016 and 2017, 639 verified and unverified attacks on schools were reported in the region,⁷¹⁰ and 100 schools were totally destroyed.⁷¹¹

Nationally, the UN verified 396 attacks on schools in 2017 from 1,000 reports.⁷¹² Additionally, GCPEA research found that, from January to October 2017, almost 100 attacks on schools occurred in the east of the country.⁷¹³ Education authorities in Tanganyika province estimated that at least 350 schools were destroyed as a result of armed conflict between March 2017 and March 2019, primarily in Kalemie, Moba, and Nyunzu territories.⁷¹⁴

Between January and June 2018, UNJHRO recorded 144 attacks on schools, most committed by unidentified actors during

conflict in Djugu district, Ituri.⁷¹⁵ During the same year, the UN verified 87 attacks on schools, which consisted primarily of burning or looting.⁷¹⁶ In addition to these, GCPEA compiled the following reports of attacks on schools in 2018:

- In January 2018, UNJHRO reported that five schools were attacked or destroyed in North Kivu, South Kivu and Kasai provinces. The perpetrators include Mayi-Mayi Mazembe and Rayia Mutomboki combatants and FARDC soldiers.⁷¹⁷
- A Rapid Evaluation Report produced by the Norwegian Refugee Council noted that six classrooms and two offices had been pillaged and destroyed in Lwama and Mariba villages in the Masisi area of North Kivu province, most likely in September or October 2018.⁷¹⁸
- From December 16 to December 18, 2018, violence erupted between the Batende and Bununu communities in the Yumbi district of Mai-Ndombe province, a previously peaceful area. A UN report documented the destruction of 17 of the 100 schools in the Yumbi province, along with almost 1,000 houses, 14 churches, and five health centers.⁷¹⁹ A media source quoted a local civil society leader, who stated that students risked not completing the school year.⁷²⁰

In 2019, attacks on schools continued to occur frequently in conflict-affected areas of eastern and central DRC, and typically involved raids, gunfire, or arson. In May 2019, the UN reported that conflict related to the Kamuina Nsapu insurgency led to the looting of 653 schools during that month, primarily in Kasai province, though the actors responsible for the looting were not specified.⁷²¹ In June 2019, an upswing in intercommunal armed conflict in Djugu territory, Ituri, led to the reported vandalism and destruction of 89 schools, according to the UN.⁷²² In September 2019, a further 98 attacks on schools were recorded in Ituri by the UN.⁷²³ The UN also verified 22 attacks on schools in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, and Tanganyika provinces, and in the Greater Kasai region.⁷²⁴ GCPEA documented nine reported incidents of attacks on schools from media, UN, and NGO sources.⁷²⁵ These included:

- On February 1, 2019, the Mayi-Mayi Apa Na Pale armed group was reported to have attacked a school in Kisengo village, Nyunzu territory, Tanganyika, according to UNJHRO. The incident affected 300 students.⁷²⁶
- The Kivu Security Tracker reported that the Raia Mutomboki Musumbu armed group burned a primary school office in Lusenge, Shabunda territory, South Kivu.⁷²⁷
- UNJHRO verified an attack on a school by FARDC soldiers in Kasai province. The soldiers indiscriminately fired gunshots inside the school premises and made threats to teachers.⁷²⁸
- On an unspecified date in mid-June 2019, *Reuters* reported that FARDC forces raided and looted a school in Kafwaya, Kolwezi territory, Lualaba, during a crackdown on illegal mining.⁷²⁹

Attacks on students, teachers, and other education personnel

Between 2017 and 2019, GCPEA identified around 15 reported attacks targeting or directly harming students, teachers, and education personnel. The FARDC and non-state armed groups were responsible for committing such attacks, primarily in eastern DRC and in the Greater Kasai region.

GCPEA recorded eight incidents of attacks on students, teachers and education personnel in 2017, affecting 14 teachers, personnel, and students; seven of those incidents occurred in Kasai-Central province.⁷³⁰

In 2018, GCPEA identified three media reports of attacks on two school students and one education official.

- On May 26, 2018, a student in Busanza, North Kivu province, was kidnapped on his way to school and a ransom was demanded for release; media sources reported that the FDLR-Rudi armed group was suspected of committing the crime.⁷³¹ During this reporting period, armed groups in DRC commonly abducted civilians for ransom as a tactic for financial gain.⁷³²
- On September 12, 2018, members of an armed group allegedly shot and killed a 16-year old female student on her way home from school in Walendu Bindi, Irumu territory, Ituri province. The girl was reportedly wearing a school uniform at the time of the incident.⁷³³
- On December 13, 2018, two armed men attacked the home of the provincial Minister of Education in Goma,

North Kivu province, in the lead up to the presidential elections. One of the attackers was killed by an armed police guard.⁷³⁴

In 2019, GCPEA compiled five reported attacks on school students or personnel, which included abduction and use of force by state security against student protests:

- Local media reported that on April 7, 2019, an unidentified armed group reportedly abducted a student from Goma, North Kivu province, and demanded a ransom of \$6,000.⁷³⁵
- On May 16, 2019, in Kiwanja, Rutshuru territory, North Kivu province, students protested against the growing number of kidnappings and murders occurring at schools in their area. Police allegedly attempted to disperse student protesters with teargas, after which students threw rocks at police officers.⁷³⁶
- On June 5, 2019, two local media sources reported that an unknown armed group kidnapped a teacher in Rutshuru, North Kivu province.⁷³⁷
- Local media reported that on October 1, 2019, armed assailants attacked school children en route to school and tortured them, in Limbeke-Mamove, Beni territory, North Kivu province.⁷³⁸
- On October 22, 2019, unidentified armed assailants abducted six students from a dormitory at the Medical Technical Institute in Mweso, Masisi territory, North Kivu province. Three students were released but the other three remained missing at the time of reporting. The perpetrators also looted school property. The school suspended classes following the event.⁷³⁹

Military use of schools and universities

Military use of schools appeared to decrease during the 2017-2019 reporting period. During the period covered in *Education under Attack 2018*, military use of schools occurred between 12 and 25 times per year, between 2013 and 2016.⁷⁴⁰ UN-verified data indicated that at least 23 schools were used for military purposes by FARDC and non-state armed groups in 2017.⁷⁴¹ Such occurrences decreased after the de-escalation of conflict in Kasai province. In 2018, the UN verified the military use of three schools, which were later vacated.⁷⁴²

In 2019, GCPEA compiled reporting by UN and media of four incidents of military use by both state and non-state actors:

- FARDC reportedly occupied a school for 14 days in Kioko village, Tanganyika province, in January 2019.⁷⁴³
- On or before February 13, 2019, disarmed Kamuina Nsapu militia members reportedly occupied a primary school in Kamako, Kamonia territory, Kasai province, according to local media; the militia members allegedly collected taxes and arrested civilians while occupying the school.⁷⁴⁴
- In March 2019, UNJHRO reported that a school in South Kivu province was occupied by Rayia Mutomboki Ngubito fighters during the group's process of disarmament.⁷⁴⁵
- In July 2019, local news reported that FARDC forces had erected a base in the yard of a primary school in Mboko, Fizi territory, South Kivu province.⁷⁴⁶

Sexual violence at, or on the way to or from, school or university

During the period covered in *Education under Attack 2020*, GCPEA identified reports of sexual violence, primarily by non-state armed groups. In 2017, the Education Cluster reported three incidents of sexual violence by armed groups against female school students in Tanganyika province.⁷⁴⁷

A study conducted by GCPEA found a number of students and school personnel, some as young as 11 years old, reported having been raped, or knowing of others who had experienced sexual violence, during and after militia attacks on schools in the greater Kasai region in 2016 and 2017. For example, in March 2017, Kamuina Nsapu militia members reportedly raped ten female students and a female administrator at a post-secondary institute in Luiza territory.⁷⁴⁸ In April 2017, a high school teacher also reported that militia members raped five girls in a classroom during an attack on a high school.⁷⁴⁹ In 2017, in Demba, Dibaya, and Dimbelenge territories, teachers and students reported that school girls

experienced sexual violence while fleeing attacks on schools in at least four incidents.⁷⁵⁰ In other cases, girls were abducted, either to be recruited into armed groups or forced into marriages with militia members, many of whom were subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence.⁷⁵¹

Attacks on higher education

Between 2017 and 2019, GCPEA identified at least 24 reports of attacks on higher education students and staff, and two attacks on higher education facilities. Attacks on higher education occurred at a higher rate than during the previous reporting period, when GCPEA collected at least seven reports of attacks on higher education between 2013 and 2016.

GCPEA counted media reports of at least eight attacks on higher education staff and students in 2017, affecting 52, either by physical injury or arrest.⁷⁵² These forms of attack were primarily related to protest and were perpetrated by police or other state security forces. In several instances, security forces used teargas or opened fire on crowds of demonstrators.

GCPEA counted 11 reported attacks on higher education students and personnel in 2018, involving both the charging and arresting of academics, and excessive violence towards, and arrests of students.⁷⁵³ Student protests relating to a range of issues incited excessive use of force, at universities across the country. Examples of these include the following:

- On February 7, 2018, Scholars at Risk reported that a professor at the University of Kisangani was charged with defamation over refusal to grant a student, who was also a military general, a passing grade. The charge against the scholar was still pending.⁷⁵⁴
- Scholars at Risk reported that on October 7, 2018, National Intelligence Agency authorities summoned and arrested a professor at the Catholic University of Graben (UCG), for remarks made at a UCG conference for mass killings by armed groups. In addition to voicing criticism of the government's defense strategy, the professor was reportedly arrested for interviewing family members and victims of attacks as part of his academic work. He was later granted a provisional release.⁷⁵⁵
- According to Scholars at Risk, on November 12, 2018, police opened fire on a peaceful student protest regarding a faculty strike at the University of Kinshasa. Police fired teargas and shot students, eventually killing one graduate student, and arresting several others.⁷⁵⁶
- In response to the death of a student at the November 12 protest, a further two protests occurred in mid-November at the University of Kinshasa, leading to one student death, student injuries, and police using teargas and opening fire on demonstrators.⁷⁵⁷

In 2019, attacks on students continued to occur at a similar rate as in 2018, with six events occurring at the time of writing.⁷⁵⁸ In addition, GCPEA identified two reported attacks on higher education facilities. These incidents include the following:

- *Deutsche Welle*, Scholars at Risk, and local media reported that three students at the University of Lubumbashi were killed on January 27, 2019, during a protest against raising tuition and utility shut-offs on campus. Police opened fire on demonstrators after students had barricaded a road to block access to the university and burned tires and vehicles. One police officer also died during this incident.⁷⁵⁹ UNJHRO later reported that the Military Court of Lubumbashi convicted 11 police officers, including a senior officer, to sentences ranging from 12 months in prison to the death penalty for murder, attempted murder, dissipation of ammunition, and violation of instructions, for killing three students and injuring four others. The court reportedly allocated damages to civil parties.⁷⁶⁰
- On February 12, 2019, *University World News* reported that staff and students of the National Pedagogical University of Kinshasa protested to remove the university management board. Students threw stones at police when they attempted to disperse them, leading police to fire teargas. Staff and students were reportedly injured, though cause of injuries was not specified.⁷⁶¹
- On April 18, 2019, a group of armed men with knives were reported to have forcibly entered the Catholic Uni-

versity of Graben in Butembo, North Kivu province, and broken windows of a residence where priests who worked at the university resided. Local media reported that the reason for the raid was to threaten the priests for allowing an Ebola treatment center on the university campus.⁷⁶² Local media reported that in a separate event the next day, a doctor at the university's clinic was allegedly killed by Mayi-Mayi militiamen.⁷⁶³ Butembo is a city at the center of the Ebola epidemic in North Kivu province, where attacks on healthcare workers and facilities have occurred since the outbreak.⁷⁶⁴

⁷³⁷ *Actualité; La Prunelle*, as cited in ACLED, Event ID DRC14533, (data downloaded July 11, 2019); "Nord-Kivu: still no news from school director kidnapped in Kiwanja (Nord-Kivu : toujours pas de nouvelles d'un directeur d'école kidnappé à Kiwanja)," *Radio Okapi*, June 7, 2019.

⁷³⁸ 7sur7, Bantou Kapanza Son, "Beni: One Woman Taken And Several Students Tortured By ADF Soldiers In Limbeke-Mamove (Beni : Une Femme Enlevée Et Plusieurs Élèves Torturés Par Les ADF À Limbeke-Mamove)," *Congo Actuel*, October 1, 2019.

⁷³⁹ Kivu Security Tracker, as cited in ACLED, Event ID DRC15817; Kivu Security Tracker, Incident #5685, October 22, 2019; Insecurity Insight, Monthly News Brief, October 2109, p. 1.

⁷⁴⁰ GCPEA, *Education Under Attack* 2018, pp. 115-116.

⁷⁴¹ UN General Assembly and Security Council, "Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General," A/72/865-S/2018/465, May 16, 2019, para. 66.

⁷⁴² UN General Assembly and Security Council, "Children and armed conflict: Report of the Secretary-General," A/73/907-S/2019/509, June 20, 2019, para. 63.

⁷⁴³ UNJHRO, "Analysis of the human rights situation in January 2019," February 2019, unpublished document.

⁷⁴⁴ *Actualité*, as cited in ACLED, Event ID DRC13627; Félix Ngalamulume "Kamako: After their surrender, former Kamuina Nsapu militiamen accused of harassment (Kamako : Après leur reddition, les anciens miliciens Kamuina Nsapu accusés des tracasseries)," *Actualité*, February 13, 2019.

⁷⁴⁵ UNJHRO, "Analysis of the human rights situation in March 2019," March 2019, unpublished document, para. 35.

⁷⁴⁶ Lubunga Lavoix, "Sud-Kivu: Army accused of establishing military base in a school in Mboko (Sud-Kivu : L'armée accusée d'ériger un campement militaire dans la cour d'une école à Mboko)," *Actualité*, July 11, 2019.

⁷⁴⁷ Information shared by the Education Cluster via email on July 31, 2017.

⁷⁴⁸ GCPEA, *"All That I Have Lost": Impact of Attacks on Education for Women and Girls in Kasai Central Province Democratic Republic of Congo*, April 2019, p. 35.

⁷⁴⁹ GCPEA, *"All That I Have Lost,"* p. 36.

⁷⁵⁰ GCPEA, *"All That I Have Lost,"* p. 38.

⁷⁵¹ GCPEA, *"All That I Have Lost,"* pp. 39-41.

⁷⁵² A full list of references can be found on GCPEA's website, https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/eua_2020_references.pdf

⁷⁵³ A full list of references can be found on GCPEA's website, https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/eua_2020_references.pdf

⁷⁵⁴ Scholars at Risk Network, Academic Freedom Monitor, University of Kisangani, February 7, 2018.

⁷⁵⁵ Scholars at Risk Network, Academic Freedom Monitor, Catholic University of Graben, October 7, 2018.

⁷⁵⁶ Scholars at Risk Network, Academic Freedom Monitor, University of Kinshasa, November 12, 2018.

⁷⁵⁷ *AFP*, as cited in ACLED, Event ID DRC13077; Scholars at Risk Network, Academic Freedom Monitor, University of Kinshasa, November 15, 2018; Wagdy Sawahel, "Amnesty issues warning in wake of student killings," *University World News*, November 27, 2018; "DRC: Human rights concerns persist as electoral campaigns kick-off," Amnesty International news release, November 21, 2018.

⁷⁵⁸ A full list of references can be found on GCPEA's website, https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/eua_2020_references.pdf

⁷⁵⁹ Mahamadou Kane, "Une manifestation d'étudiants fait plusieurs morts à Lubumbashi (A student protest leads to several deaths in Lubumbashi)," *Deutsche Welle*, January 28, 2019; *Actualité* (DRC), as cited in ACLED, Event ID DRC13474; Scholars at Risk Network, Academic Freedom Monitor, University of Lubumbashi, January 27, 2019.

⁷⁶⁰ UNJHRO, "Analysis of the human rights situation in February 2019," March 2019, unpublished document, para. 38.

⁷⁶¹ "University managers suspended after violent protests," *University World News*, February 22, 2019.

⁷⁶² Claude Sengenya, "DRC: Monastery of Catholic priests attacked in Butembo (RDC : Un couvent des prêtres catholiques attaqué à Butembo)," *Actualité*, April 19, 2019.

⁷⁶³ *Actualité*, as cited in ACLED, Event ID DRC14199.

⁷⁶⁴ World Health Organization (WHO), "Situation report: Ebola crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo," July 24, 2019.