

Widespread militia activities, political unrest drive millions from their homes in DR Congo, UN warns

24 October 2017 – Some 3.9 million people across several regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have been displaced from their homes, and amid growing violence and unrest, the United Nations refugee agency warned on Tuesday that the number could rise even further.

According to a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)), over the last three months alone, more than 428,000 people have been displaced.

“With widespread militia activities, and unrest and violence fuelled by ethnic and political conflict affecting many areas, the risk of further displacement is high,” UNHCR spokesperson Adrian Edwards told journalists at a regular briefing in Geneva today.

“The challenges of getting aid to people in need are growing fast,” he added.

In particular, the regions of Tanganyika, North and South Kivu, and Kasai are the worst affected due to intercommunal clashes, fighting between armed groups and increasing number of armed militia.

Complicating the matters is the onset of the rainy season, that has necessitated the need to beef up public health, sanitation and water supplies to prevent the outbreak of disease. Psychosocial support as well as care for people with specific needs is also urgently required.

In light of the worsening conditions, the UN agency and humanitarian partners have declared the situation in DRC to ‘level 3’ – the highest level of emergency.

Level 3 emergency

In the context of Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), a [Level 3 emergency](#) would typically be a sudden onset complex emergency requiring the activation of a UN system-wide response, with agreed mechanisms, tools and procedures.

Glossary, UNHCR Global Report 2014

In addition to the people displaced within DRC, over 620,000 Congolese refugees are sheltering in more than 11 African nations – about 100,000 of them within the past one year.

And at the same time, the number of refugees from neighbouring countries

seeking refuge inside the DRC has grown by a third since early 2016 and now stands at 526,000 people.

“We continue to see new arrivals from Burundi, the Central African Republic and South Sudan,” said Mr. Edwards, noting that funding is urgently needed for the response.

Bettina Luescher, for the World Food Programme ([WFP](#)), said the agency is scaling up capacities in the provinces of Kasai (proper) and Kasai Central – the hardest-hit of Greater Kasai’s five provinces, with a threefold increase in the number of severely hungry people over the past 18 months. Two thirds of the severely hungry are in Kasai province alone, she added.

Of the \$236.2 million required for the needs of refugees, IDPs and other people of concern in the DRC, only \$49.7 million has been received so far – a fifth of the amount required.