

Timeline

- 1885-1908** After King Leopold of Belgium acquires rights to the Congo, roughly 10 million Congolese die due to foreign exploitation.
- 1960** Belgium agrees to hold new elections and cede power to the winning party. Patrice Lumumba is declared Prime Minister of the First Republic.
- September 14, 1960** With assistance from the CIA, Army Chief of Staff Joseph Mobutu stages a military coup and murders Patrice Lumumba.
- 1971** Congo is renamed the Republic of Zaire.
- 1973-74** Mobutu nationalizes many foreign-owned companies forcing out foreign investors.
- 1990** Mobutu agrees to multi-party politics and a transitional government, but maintains power.
- 1991** Unpaid soldiers revolt leading to a coalition government with opposition leaders, but Mobutu retains control of security and vital ministries.
- 1996-1997** Laurent Kabila takes over the government, with the help of anti-Mobutu rebels, Angola, Burundi, Eritrea, Rwanda, and Uganda, while Mobutu is out of the country. Zaire is renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).
- 1998** Kabila attempts to expel all foreign troops. The Second Congolese War begins as new troops enter from Rwanda and Uganda with the intention of replacing Kabila with the Rwanda backed RCD (Rally for Congolese Democracy). Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe intervene and back Kabila leading the RCD to withdraw.
- 1999** At the beginning of the year, after the MLC (Movement for the Liberation of the Congo) backed by Uganda takes control over the Northern third of the DRC, foreign governments agree to a ceasefire. However, the situation deteriorates when the agreement is not fully implemented.
- 2000** UN Security Council calls for an end to violence, demands Rwanda and Uganda withdraw.
- 2001** Laurent Kabila is assassinated and his son Joseph becomes president. 2.5 million people are estimated to have been killed since 1998. UN claims the parties are intentionally prolonging the conflict in order to profit from natural resources.
- 2002** A new peace and power sharing agreement is signed in hopes of ending the war.
- 2003** A transitional government is set up with Kabila remaining president and the rebel group leaders acting as vice presidents. The Second Congo War is officially declared over.
- 2004** Sporadic violence erupts within the army and between government forces and rebel forces. UN deploys 5,900 peacekeepers to assist with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- 2005** Voters support the constitution allowing for the 2006 elections. The International Court of Justice states that Uganda must compensate the DRC for human rights abuses and resource depletion. Three mass graves are discovered in North Kivu.
- 2006** For the first time in over 40 years, multi-party elections are held. After no clear winner emerges between Kabila and Jean-Pierre Bemba, a run-off election leads to Kabila's inauguration as fighting breaks out between those loyal to their respective candidate.
- 2007** Clashes continue between government troops

and Bemba loyalists.

2008 Violence erupts between the army and UN troops, and a rebel group led by Congolese Tutsi leader Nkunda after the Goma peace agreement fails. Rwanda is accused, but denies supporting Nkunda.

2009 Congolese and Rwandan forces operate against Tutsi rebels. Nkunda is arrested in Rwanda. Hutu rebels resurface in eastern DRC. Kabila endorses amnesty for armed groups in an attempt to quell the fighting. Hillary Clinton, US Secretary of State pledges a \$17 million aid package for victims of sexual violence.

2010 The World Bank and the IMF approve an \$8 billion debt relief deal. UN envoy Margot Wallstrom accuses rebels and the army of perpetrating mass rapes in North Kivu. Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Zimbabwe and Angola are implicated in Hutu deaths between 1993 and 2003 that the UN says may constitute "crimes of genocide". UN also reports groups in the army are encouraging violence and profiting from mining, poaching, and smuggling. Bemba is accused of allowing soldiers to rape and kill in CAR between 2002 and 2003 at his ICC trial.

2011 Lt-Col Kibibi Muware is sentenced to 20 years for his role in mass rape. Rwandan Hutu rebel Ignace Murwanashyaka's trial begins in Germany for crimes against humanity. Col Nyiragire Kulimunshi surrenders after being accused of ordering mass rapes. During the election cycle, opposition party affiliates and followers, journalists, and human rights advocates are threatened, arrested without due cause and killed according to Human Rights Watch. Kabila wins a new term in presidential and parliamentary elections amid international and opposition criticism.

2012 Warlord Thomas Lubanga receives 14 years for using child soldiers. UN Security Council announces plan to sanction the M23 rebel group. UN accuses Rwanda and Uganda of supplying weapons and support to M23. M23 takes over Goma, then withdraws when the government promises to release M23 supporters.



Torture Methods

RAPE is systematically used by militia groups, the national army, and even by UN troops to torture and to terrorize the civilian population. The victims of rape are stigmatized by the community and their families. Women are considered tainted. Often husbands leave their wives and place the blame on the victims rather than the perpetrators.

BEATINGS are commonly used against civilians as punishment for colluding with the enemy and in order to get victims to carry out the wishes of the perpetrators. Child soldiers are routinely beaten into submission.

MUTILATIONS have been used by militia groups and national military members against civilians in front of their families and to the point of death. Mutilations are used to send a signal to those in the resource mines to meet quotas. When quotas are not met, workers body parts are cut off as punishment and as a sign to others. In addition, mutilations are used as warning signs that anyone who speaks negatively about their group will be punished.

FORCED MARCHING has been used primarily by militia groups who capture civilians including children, tie them together at the waist with ropes or metal wires, force them to carry supplies and use them as human shields. Often adults are killed or set free, children are kept and forced to kill family members, neighbors, those attempting to escape, the tired, weak, and those considered disposable.

KIDNAPPING of adults and children is a tool of militia groups, especially the LRA to force boys to fight and girls into sexual slavery.

ROBBERY, DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY, and looting are other tools used by many groups including the army to terrorize civilians into submission.

DISCRIMINATION AND MARGINALIZATION occurs in staggering numbers against rape victims, indigenous groups, and those in extreme poverty. Restricting food and water is used to terrorize political victims, child soldiers, and marginalized indigenous groups.

ELECTRIC SHOCK is used to terrorize political prisoners, as a form of punishment, and to get them to talk.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND THREATS have been reportedly used to intimidate and control journalists, human rights activists, and opposition parties.

Current Situation

DEATH TOLL

Since the start of fighting in 1998, over 5.5 million people have died and continue to die at staggering rates. Many victims died from exposure, hunger, or lack of medical assistance after being displaced. Almost half of the deaths have been children. Approximately 45,000 still continue to die each month. While some people are returning home, there are about 1.5 million internally displaced people or refugees. Approximately 1.3 million households are experiencing food insecurity.

REGIONAL INVOLVEMENT

The conflict in the DRC is comprised of both interstate and intrastate conflicts. Foreign militaries inside the DRC have attempted to bring peace and at the same time have fostered violent ethnic conflict.

M23

The new rebel group, M23 was formed when General Bosco Ntaganda deserted the military and joined with members of the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP), which was a group that had been incorporated into the army in 2009. The militaries of neighboring countries have reportedly given support to M23. In addition, M23 has been accused of pervasive war crimes, which include execution, rape, and the use and recruitment of child soldiers.

NORTH KIVU

The security situation is reportedly deteriorating in the North Kivu region with cases of extortion, rape, and assassination by armed militias. Local civilians fear the withdrawal of Congo troops and the threats of Ugandan rebels. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has terrorized civilians through rape, murder, kidnapping, looting, arson, property destruction, robbery, and forced conscription of minors. While the LRA hinders repatriation of displaced people, repatriation continues for refugees inside the DRC to their home countries and displaced citizens outside the DRC back to their communities.

LRA

Between May and September of 2010, Human Rights Watch interviewed hundreds of victims of the LRA in an attempt to appeal to international leaders for assistance. In the DRC, the LRA has killed 2,385 and kidnapped over 3054 since September of 2008 according to Human Rights Watch and United Nations documents. However, with attacks occurring in many remote villages, it is likely that the numbers could be much higher. The LRA does not have clear political goals and very little popular support.

MINERALS

Greed and profit from the trade in minerals is one of the main motives of the armed groups on all sides of the conflict, particularly in Eastern Congo. These groups earn hundreds of millions of dollars each year by trading many minerals, including coltan, cassiterite, tin, tantalum, tungsten, and gold. With the money, the militias are able to buy large caches of weapons and to continue their violent assault against the civilian population. The worst human rights violations occur in the mining area. Most of these minerals are used by industrial countries in electronic devices.