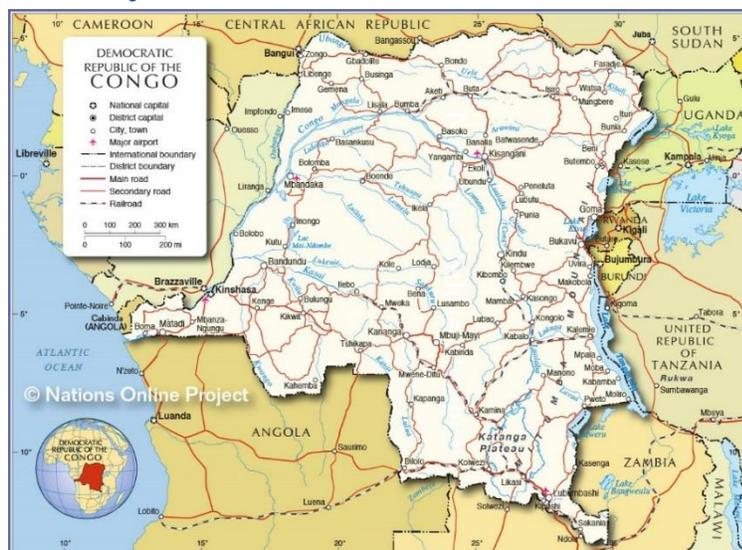


Situation in the D.R. Congo

History of the Current Situation



Since 1996, the United Nations Security Council has had a prominent presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) through peacekeeping missions. This makes the nation's stability and sustainability a top priority for the Security Council.

In 1960, the then colony gained its independence from Belgium. However, from the country's beginnings it had economic hardships and political instability. During the 1960s, the country experienced a military coup as well as the assassination of its first leader. This conflict, known as the Congo Crisis caused the United Nations to become

involved, which deployed over 20,000 peacekeepers to the country at the height of its involvement.¹ These series of crises impoverished the nation and killed an estimated 100,000 people. His successor, Mobutu gained the support of the United States when the DR Congo began aligning with the permanent Security Council member during the Cold War. Mobutu would remain in power through the 1990s.²

During the 1990s, the nation began taking in Hutu refugees during the Rwandan Genocide sparking violence between the DR Congo and Rwanda. Eastern DR Congo saw nearly 2 million Rwandan Hutu refugees flee there during the genocide. This influx of Hutu Rwandans and the porous nature of DR Congo's border with Rwanda caused tensions with Hutu rebel groups operating out of the DR Congo and attacking Rwanda and Rwanda backing rebel groups in the DR Congo to harass the armed Hutu groups.³ Even as the events of the genocide have faded into the past, Rwanda has continued to back many rebel groups within the Eastern DR Congo. These groups, such as M23, wreak havoc on the region, terrorizing the population, destroying the environment and steal DR Congo's natural resources.⁴ This eventually led to a year-long civil war involving many Sub-Saharan nations and many rebel groups within the DR Congo. In 1999 a ceasefire between the nations was signed and peace efforts by the Security Council began. Because of many illicit trades during the early 2000s, as well as poor infrastructure and failed peace missions, the country was left in poverty and once again at the edge of political turmoil.

Recent History

In 2006, the country held its first free election in four decades and elected Joseph Kabila as the new president. However, with a breakout of the Ebola virus as well as political tensions between factions within the nation, the country was still far from stable. In 2008, rebel forces began capturing different areas of the nation and spurred opposition against the Kabila government. After 2011 when President Kabila was reelected, many within the country became aware of the government's corruption, sparking a

¹ "The UN and the Congo Crisis of 1960. *Yale University*.

https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1006&context=applebaum_award.

² "The Congo, Decolonization, and the Cold War, 1960–1965." *U.S. Department of State*.

<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/congo-decolonization>.

³ "Rwanda genocide: 'Domino effect' in DR Congo." *BBC*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26946982>.

⁴ "Examining the Role of Rwanda in the DRC Insurgency." *Crisis Group*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/democratic-republic-congo/examining-role-rwanda-drc-insurgency>.

new wave of violence. As of 2019, 80% of citizens reported having paid a bribe to the government in order to make use of public services.⁵ By 2017, conflict within the country forced 1.7 million people to be displaced from their homes.⁶ January of 2019 brought in a new era of change when President Felix Tshisekedi was elected as the new president of the D.R. Congo. However, conflict in the country continues as the opposition of the new leadership continues to grow and legitimate concerns about electoral fraud during the Presidential Election continue to gain steam.⁷

Political Crisis

Political Instability and Violence

Corruption within the Congolese government as well as violence between armed factions have left the country in political turmoil. Many of these factions and armed groups are aiming for control of the country's many natural resources such as gold, diamonds, uranium, and oil. This violent competition has hindered the nation's development and has left many of the citizens to suffer.⁸ Also, the situation has not significantly improved since the election of President Felix Tshisekedi. After the election, Tshisekedi signed an agreement with the former president Kabila despite the former leader's corrupt government.⁹ Tshisekedi did this in order to gain support from supporters of Kabila and maintain his legitimacy. The agreement's purpose was to protect Kabila's interests after he left office. Because of this agreement, the new president is in a constant struggle to limit Kabila's political power; a task that is complicated by Kabila's political party's control over the National Assembly, Senate, Provincial Assemblies, and a majority of newly elected governors. This control also means Kabila has most of the power over the economy and security of the nation. Although Tshisekedi is attempting to broaden his political power and maintain peace, this conflict over control could potentially lead to a new surge of violence in the nation.¹⁰

The country's long-term twin issues of political instability and violence have caused the country's UN Mission, MONUSCO, to stay long past its original mandate. A small force sent in 1999 to oversee the enforcement of a peace agreement, it has ballooned into one of the UN's largest and most expensive missions (costing \$1.1 billion a year) with 20,000 observers deployed.¹¹ Recently a UN panel recommended that MONUSCO should depart the country by 2022, despite the country's continued issues with violence and political chaos. The UN panel argued that MONUSCO has met its original goal and helped create the right conditions for peace to flourish. While DR Congo did hold a presidential election in 2018, the country now has over 100 armed groups in its Eastern region alone and the Congolese military continues to engage in human rights violations throughout the nation. Yet, within DR Congo there is a growing frustration that UN Peacekeepers are not doing enough. Protestors attacked a UN headquarters in Beni in 2019 over anger that UN Peacekeepers had not protected residence from armed groups that had recently attacked the town.¹²

Refugee Crisis

⁵ "Democratic Republic of the Congo." *Transparency International*. <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo#>.

⁶ "DR Congo displacement crisis 'worse than Middle East'." *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-42250230>.

⁷ "The Truth About United States' Complicity in DRC's Fraudulent Election." *Council on Foreign Relations*. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/truth-about-united-states-complicity-drcs-fraudulent-election>.

⁸ "Overview of the Political Crisis in DR Congo and the Human Rights, Security, and Humanitarian Consequences." *Human Rights Watch*. www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/09/overview-political-crisis-dr-congo-and-human-rights-security-and-humanitarian.

⁹ "DRC: Felix Tshisekedi and Joseph Kabila agree on coalition." *DW*. <https://www.dw.com/en/drc-felix-tshisekedi-and-joseph-kabila-agree-on-coalition/a-47816034>.

¹⁰ "From an Electoral to a Political Crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo." *Conflict Research Programme*. <https://www.blogs.lse.ac.uk/crp/2019/08/14/electoral-to-a-political-crisis-in-the-drc/>.

¹¹ "Is the Democratic Republic of Congo ready for peacekeepers to leave by 2022?" *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/is-the-democratic-republic-of-congo-ready-for-peacekeepers-to-leave-by-2022-127729>.

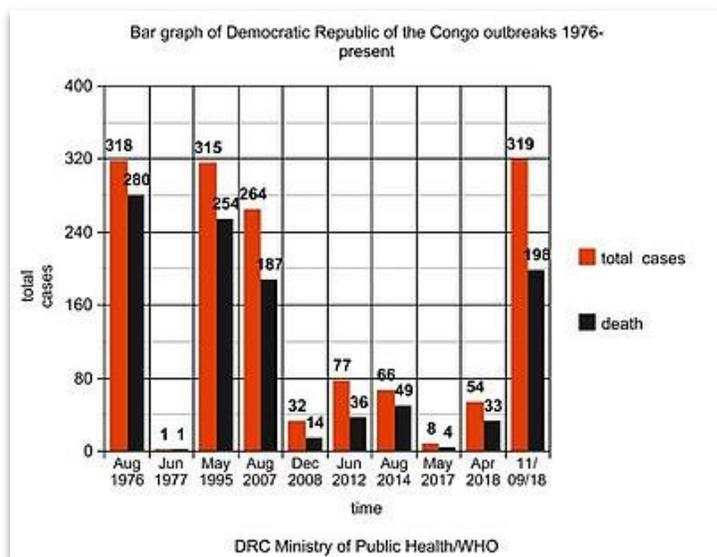
¹² "Angry demonstrators storm UN camp in DRC after deadly attack." *Al-Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/25/angry-demonstrators-storm-un-camp-in-drc-after-deadly-attack/>.

Along with the political crisis, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency, the DR Congo hosts over 527,000 refugees from neighboring African nations.¹³ Also, since its independence in 1960, there have been 5 million people internally displaced within the country. And, because violence still plagues the nation, especially in the Southern Region, many more are continuing to be displaced. Millions have also fled the DR Congo. Not only has widespread violence among armed groups harmed the refugees, but large Ebola outbreaks have also negatively impacted refugee populations in an extreme way. Since 2018, the country has been battling the worst outbreak ever recorded in the nation. Also, the provinces that are most impacted by the outbreak, Ituri and North Kivu, are also the provinces holding the most refugees. So, the outbreak has impacted camps like the one in the image above devastatingly over the past two years. The displacement of these people has also led to increase sexual violence against women, and children are losing access to their education.¹⁴



Humanitarian and Environmental Crises

The Ebola Virus and COVID 19



The DR Congo has had a number of Ebola outbreaks throughout its history, the worst of which happened two years ago when 3481 total cases emerged in the North Kivu and Ituri region and 2299 people died.¹⁵ Although the latest outbreak has been quelled, there are still concerns as to how to prevent another outbreak, as well as how to protect refugee populations as those were the most impacted.

The COVID-19 outbreak has also greatly impacted the DR Congo like many other nations across the world. Since the first case in March 2020, over 4,500 people have tested positive for COVID-19 as of August 2020.¹⁶ Also, Doctors Without Borders predicts this is an extreme underestimation due to the

limited testing capabilities within the nation.¹⁷ The outbreak has also had many secondary impacts. For instance, HIV/AIDS consultations have dropped 30% since the outbreak's beginnings so less people are

¹³ "Democratic Republic of the Congo Refugee Crisis Explained." *UNHCR*. <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-refugee-crisis-explained/>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ "Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo." *World Health Organization*. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/ebola/drc-2019>.

¹⁶ "DRC: COVID-19 Continues to Spread, with Potentially Deadly Secondary Impacts." *Doctors Without Borders*. www.doctorswithoutborders.org/what-we-do/news-stories/news/drc-covid-19-continues-spread-potentially-deadly-secondary-impacts.

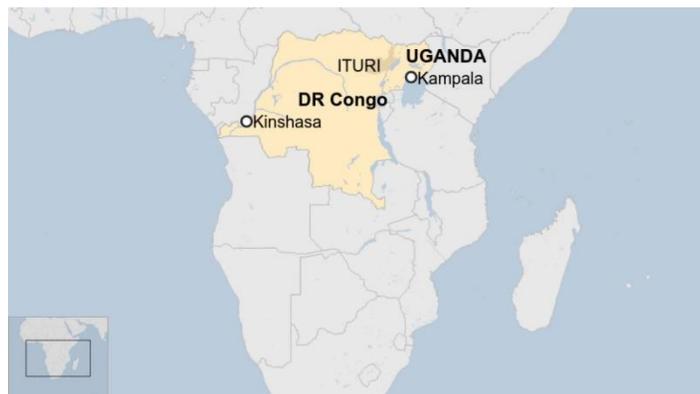
¹⁷ Ibid.

getting the information they need for the disease. Also, there has been a 44% drop in general consultations because people are too scared to go to their doctors. For HIV/AIDS patients this represents a major issue as over half a million Congolese live with the affliction and it kills around 15,000 people die each year.¹⁸ Without access to proper healthcare HIV transmissions and deaths from the illness could increase.

Deforestation

The DR Congo is home to the world's second-largest rainforest in the world and over 80 million people depend on it for food, charcoal, and medicine. However, continued deforestation in the area could lead to mass food insecurity as well as a lack of freshwater for people living in and near the Congo Basin. The DR Congo lost the second-largest area of tropical rainforest of any country on Earth since 2018.¹⁹ This loss is extremely significant to the people living in the area and most of it is caused by slash and burn farming in the rainforest. According to the University of Maryland's research, at the rate the forest is disappearing, it could be completely gone by 2100.²⁰ Also, because tropical rainforests help regulate rainfall, the loss of the trees has caused countries such as Ethiopia and Somalia to become increasingly dry and arid. This issue has also led to many people leaving their home countries because they cannot farm in the dry conditions. So, this issue does not solely impact the DR Congo but also the whole of Africa. In order to hinder this issue, the DR Congo's lands must be managed more thoughtfully and it will take the international community to create a plan to make sure the forest and in turn the continent of Africa does not suffer from this crisis.

Case Study #1 Uganda opens border to DR Congo refugees amid COVID-19 Pandemic



Amid the COVID -19 Pandemic, Uganda opened part of its border to thousands of refugees from the DR Congo. In May of 2020, over 3,000 people fled the country to Uganda after many armed clashes in the north-eastern Ituri Region. However, in March Uganda had closed its borders because of the COVID-19 pandemic so the refugees were unable to cross the border.²¹ The country eventually decided to allow the refugees into the country, however they were subject to quarantine for 14 days 8

miles from the border. Then, the United Nations refugee agency gave sample testing to the group to see if coronavirus was amongst them, before being settled in refugee camps in Northern Uganda.

Currently, Uganda holds more than 1.4 million refugees, 30% of which are from the DR Congo. Agencies involved with the Uganda refugee camps have had concerns about ensuring social distancing and sanitation in the refugee settlements. Already, 52 refugees from the DR Congo have tested positive for COVID-19 in the Ugandan camps.²² So, this issue could grow exponentially if not addressed properly. As this issue continues to escalate, the United Nations is also concerned about rising reports of violence in

¹⁸ "Democratic Republic of the Congo." *UNAIDS*.

<https://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/democraticrepublicofthecongo>.

¹⁹ "Congo Basin Deforestation Threatens Food and Water Supplies Throughout Africa." *World Resources Institute*, www.wri.org/blog/2019/07/congo-basin-deforestation-threatens-food-and-water-supplies-throughout-africa.

²⁰ "Congo Basin rainforest may be gone by 2100, study finds." *Global Forest Reporting Network*. <https://news.mongabay.com/2018/11/congo-basin-rainforest-may-be-gone-by-2100-study-finds/>.

²¹ "Coronavirus: Uganda Opens Border for DR Congo Refugees." *BBC News*. www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53249050.

²² *Ibid*.

the Eastern parts of the DR Congo, that could cause more refugees to attempt to flee the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because the nation has one of the highest rates of displaced people in the world it is probable that there will be more instances of refugee crises amid the pandemic which deeply concerns the international community. In order to limit the number of refugees fleeing the DR Congo during this time of crisis for the world, it is important to look at the deep-rooted issues within the Ituri region. The ethnic violence in the region between the Lendu and Hema communities is one of the main concerns of many international organizations. The violence between the two communities has surged since March 2020 due to competition for control of gold mines in the region.²³ The UN Human Rights Commissioner stated that the main violent group in the region comes from the Lendu community and has been pursuing a strategy of “slaughtering local residents – mainly the Hema” in order to control the region’s natural resources. So, the United Nations Security Council should make this issue a top priority in order to prevent a refugee crisis during the COVID -19 pandemic.

Case Study #2 DR Congo Justice Minister detained highlighting tensions between current President Tshisekedi and supporters of his predecessor

On June 27 2020, the Justice Minister for the DR Congo, Celestin Tunda, was briefly detained shortly after a clash between him and the current President Felix Tshisekedi regarding justice system reform. After several hours of detainment, he was eventually released. Shortly after, the justice minister resigned from his post in office.²⁴ This arrest highlights the tensions between the DR Congo’s current president and his predecessor Kabila’s government. Tunda was a prominent member of Kabila’s party which also holds a majority of the nation’s Parliament and the most Cabinet seats.

Just before Tunda was arrested, he had an argument with the current President about justice reform.²⁵ The change would have given the Ministry of Justice more control over the DR Congo’s prosecutors, which many diplomats believe would “damage the independence of the judiciary” and would disturb the balance of power within the government. According to the embassies of Canada, The United Kingdom, and The United States, “undermining this independence would erode protection of civil and political rights in the [DR Congo].” After the detainment, hundreds of people protested against the law at a Parliament meeting. However, these protests were responded with police firing tear gas and water cannons. After the arrest and release, the Justice Minister resigned from his position on July 11 2020. Tunda gave no reason for his resignation. The arrest, protests, and resignation show the fragile state of the DR Congo’s government and how much work needs to be done to make the political situation within the nation more stable. Although his resignation removes one element of tension within the government, there is still much work to be done as Tshisekedi struggles to maintain power amid supporters of Kabila’s government.

Organizations Working in the DR Congo

USAID

Currently, USAID is working in the DR Congo to improve food security, support democracy, and protect education and the environment. There are many programs in place through USAID in order to improve natural resource management as well, which is a huge issue for the nation. However, one of USAID’s

²³ “Unrelenting Killings in Congo’s Ituri Province.” *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/22/unrelenting-killings-congos-ituri-province>.

²⁴ “DR Congo Justice Minister Celestin Tunda resigns after dispute.” *Al-Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/7/11/dr-congo-justice-minister-celestin-tunda-resigns-after-dispute>.

²⁵ “DR Congo Justice Minister briefly detained.” *Al-Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/6/27/dr-congo-justice-minister-briefly-detained>.

main programs within the nation is to promote democracy. The institution does this by providing technical assistance and by training leaders of political parties to better respond to their constituents needs. It is important to wonder what motivates the United States to do this within the DR Congo.

Belgian Cooperation Industry

The Country of Belgium has much influence in the DR Congo and is working to improve infrastructure, healthcare, governance, and social development. One of Belgium's main projects within the country is to provide agricultural seeds to rural communities as well as to repair roads and river ferries so the nation's agricultural sector will thrive. It is also important to note Belgium's economic ties to the nation as well as its oppressing history of colonization within the DR Congo.

Other Organizations

Other organizations involved within the DR Congo include the British Development Agency as well as the Agence française de développement. It is interesting to note that most of the organizations and programs attempting to help solve the problems in the DR Congo are from the western world. It is important to raise questions about this and ask whether this impacts the effectiveness of the programs keeping in mind the history the DR Congo has with the Western World.

Questions to Ponder

- Why are humanitarian efforts in the D.R. Congo not working?
- Which issue within the D.R Congo needs to be addressed first?
- How can the UNSC work to improve the D.R. Congo without overstepping their bounds?
- How Can the UNSC hinder deforestation in the Congo Basin?
- How can epidemics such as Ebola be prevented in the D.R. Congo?
- What Can the UNSC do to protect refugees in the D.R. Congo? And, what long term plan can be put in place for the refugees to return home?
- How should deep-rooted political problems in the D.R. Congo be handled?