



## CONGO CRISIS: INTERNATIONAL RELATION

**NEWS:** Lab holding Ebola in DRC's Goma at risk amid fighting: Red Cross

### WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is witnessing an escalation in the conflict between government forces and M23 rebels, reportedly backed by Rwanda. The fighting has intensified in **Goma**, a key city in eastern DRC, leading to severe humanitarian consequences. The **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** has also raised concerns about a potential **biosecurity threat**, warning that fighting near a national biomedical research laboratory could lead to the escape of deadly pathogens like **Ebola**.

### 1. Clashes in Goma: Root Causes & Current Situation

#### Historical Context of the M23 Rebellion

- The **March 23 Movement (M23)** is a Tutsi-led rebel group active in **North Kivu Province**, eastern DRC.
- Formed in **2012**, the group **claims to fight for the rights of ethnic Tutsis** in the region.
- The DRC government and international bodies **accuse Rwanda of supporting M23**, a claim Rwanda denies.

#### Recent Escalation of Conflict

- **M23 rebels launched fresh attacks** in eastern DRC, **advancing towards Goma** in early 2024.
- Heavy clashes with **Congolese security forces** have been reported, leading to **civilian casualties and mass displacement**.
- The DRC government **accuses Rwanda** of backing the rebels, further straining diplomatic relations between the two nations.

#### Impact of the Fighting in Goma

- **Casualties & Displacement:** Thousands of people have been forced to flee the conflict zone, worsening the humanitarian crisis.
- **Foreign Embassy Attacks:** Protesters in **Kinshasa (the capital of DRC)** targeted embassies of Rwanda, **France, Belgium, Kenya, and Uganda**, demanding action against M23 rebels.
- **Security Measures:** The **Congolese army** is trying to push back the rebels, while the **UN peacekeeping force (MONUSCO)** is monitoring the situation.

### 2. Biosecurity Risk: ICRC's Warning on Potential Pathogen Escape



## National Biomedical Research Institute in Goma

- Houses sensitive biological samples, including **Ebola virus strains**.
- The ongoing fighting **raises the risk of accidental release of pathogens**, which could trigger a public health emergency.

## Why is Ebola a Concern?

- **Highly contagious viral disease** with a **high fatality rate (50-90%)**.
- Past Ebola outbreaks in DRC have killed thousands.
- If the lab is compromised, the outbreak could spread beyond **Goma to neighboring countries**.

## ICRC's Humanitarian Appeal

- Calls for **urgent protection of medical facilities and research centers**.
- Warns of **devastating consequences if proper containment measures fail**.
- Appeals for **diplomatic intervention to prevent further escalation**.

## 3. Strategic Importance of Goma

### Geopolitical & Economic Significance

- **Capital of North Kivu Province** and one of the **largest cities in eastern DRC**.
- Located on the **northern shore of Lake Kivu**, directly bordering **Rwanda**.
- A critical hub for **regional trade, humanitarian aid, and resource transportation**.

### Challenges Facing Goma

- **Border Tensions:** Ongoing disputes with Rwanda over rebel activity and territorial integrity.
- **Refugee Crisis:** The city hosts **hundreds of thousands of displaced people** from previous conflicts.
- **Resource Exploitation:** Eastern DRC is **rich in minerals** (gold, coltan, cobalt), making it a hotspot for **armed group activity**.

## 4. About the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

### Geographical Features



- **Second-largest country in Africa** after Algeria.
- Lies in **both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres** as the Equator passes through it.
- **Capital:** Kinshasa, located along the **Congo River**, the only river in Africa that crosses the Equator twice.
- **Major mining regions:** Katanga Plateau (rich in **cobalt, copper, tin, uranium, and diamonds**).
- **Highest Peak:** Mount Stanley in the Rwenzori Mountains.

## Security & Political Challenges

- DRC has suffered from **decades of civil wars, ethnic conflicts, and foreign interventions**.
- Rebel groups like **M23, ADF, and Mai-Mai militias** continue to operate in the region.
- Despite its **vast mineral wealth, corruption, political instability, and foreign exploitation hinder economic development**.





## 5. About Rwanda

### Geographical Features

- Landlocked country in East-Central Africa, part of the African Great Lakes region.
- **Capital:** Kigali.
- **Borders:** Uganda (north), Tanzania (east), Burundi (south), DRC (west).
- **Major Water Bodies:**
  - Lake Kivu (largest lake, borders DRC).
  - Mukungwa River (Nile Basin), Rusizi River (Congo Basin).
  - Lake Victoria does NOT border Rwanda.
- **Highest Peak:** Mount Karisimbi in the Virunga Mountains.





## Rwanda-DRC Relations

- **Historical tensions due to Hutu-Tutsi conflicts** (linked to the 1994 Rwandan Genocide).
- Rwanda accused of **supporting M23 rebels**, fueling cross-border hostilities.
- **Regional alliances and rivalries shape the conflict** in eastern Congo.

The escalation of conflict in Goma highlights the **volatile security situation in eastern DRC**, with regional implications involving Rwanda. The **biosecurity threat posed by fighting near a biomedical lab** adds another layer of urgency to the crisis, as an **Ebola outbreak could have devastating consequences**. The **international community faces increasing pressure** to intervene and mediate the situation to prevent further humanitarian disasters.

**Source:** [https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/lab-holding-ebola-in-drcs-goma-at-risk-amid-fighting-red-cross/article69151203.ece#:~:text=The%20Red%20Cross%20voiced%20alarm%20on%20Tuesday%20\(January%2028%2C%202025,in%20a%20laboratory%20to%20escape.](https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/lab-holding-ebola-in-drcs-goma-at-risk-amid-fighting-red-cross/article69151203.ece#:~:text=The%20Red%20Cross%20voiced%20alarm%20on%20Tuesday%20(January%2028%2C%202025,in%20a%20laboratory%20to%20escape.)

