

**UN Must Not Make Congo Crisis Worse** Refugees International 24 July 2013 Tomorrow, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry will preside over a United Nations Security Council debate on the Democratic Republic of Congo and the wider Great Lakes region. During that debate, Council members will weigh in on the UN's evolving DRC strategy, including a new 'intervention brigade' being added to the country's UN peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO). The intervention brigade will be operational sometime in August and will be tasked with leading offensive operations against rebel groups. Refugees International (RI) urges Secretary Kerry and the Council to recognize that unless certain safeguards are imposed, military action by the intervention brigade could further exacerbate the DRC's humanitarian crisis.

Despite some progress in recent months on the political front, ongoing fighting between the Congolese armed forces and the rebel M23 militia has displaced thousands of people, and the total number of IDPs now stands at 2.6 million. Even before the most recent outbreak of fighting, due in part to access constraints and insecurity, humanitarians were unable to respond to the needs the displaced and host communities. Some Council members and regional governments believe MONUSCO's intervention brigade can reduce violence and displacement by neutralizing non-state armed groups, but there is cause for doubt.

"History tells us that any military offensive in the DRC, regardless of who leads it, will have significant humanitarian consequences," said RI Advocate Caelin Briggs. "In 2009, for example, a UN-supported campaign by the Congolese army disarmed a reported 1,071 rebels but displaced 900,000 people and resulted in 1,400 civilian deaths and an estimated 7,500 rapes. The Council must ensure that the actions of MONUSCO's intervention brigade do not create a similar humanitarian disaster."

At both the command and battalion levels, MONUSCO has been unable or unwilling to protect civilians in many cases. Just last year, when the city of Goma was overtaken by M23 rebels, MONUSCO troops allowed displaced persons camps to be attacked and, in some cases, refused to shelter fleeing civilians. MONUSCO has also been tarnished by its collaboration with the undisciplined and abusive Congolese military, which was accused of raping hundreds of women during its retreat from Goma.

(...)

See full press release, including recommendations to MONUSCO, [here](#) .