

## **DR of Congo: UN human rights chief applauds deployment of emergency force**

*30 May* – The top United Nations human rights official today [applauded](#) the unanimous decision by the Security Council to authorize the deployment of an international emergency force to the Ituri district of in the northeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

“This is the Security Council at its best,” Sergio Vieira de Mello, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said in a statement. “And a demonstration that the Secretary General and the Security Council can act swiftly, hand-in-hand, to protect the lives of the civilian population in conflict areas, a paramount human rights and humanitarian concern.”

The Council unanimously adopted a resolution authorizing the deployment of an international emergency force to help stabilize the situation in the DRC’s volatile northeast, where ethnic fighting has killed more than 400 people. The French-led force will be in Bunia until 1 September to contribute to the stabilization of the security and grave humanitarian situation there, as well ensure the protection of the airport, the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the camps and, if the situation requires it, to participate in the protection of the population, UN personnel and the humanitarian presence in town.

Earlier Friday, the High Commissioner voiced his concern over the plight of the civilian population in Bunia and the level and extent of the atrocities committed there, especially against women and children.

He also strongly deplored the use of the mass media to incite hatred against particular groups and called on all parties to stop the killings of civilians and do their utmost to prevent further violations of humanitarian law and of the most fundamental human rights. “For those who are engaged in such crimes,” he stressed, “there can be no impunity.”

Meanwhile, on the ground in Bunia, no fighting was reported today, according to a UN spokesperson in New York. The number of dead bodies collected so far by the local Red Cross, working together with the UN Organization Mission in the DRC (MONUC), now stood at 415.

MONUC was also continuing its efforts to re-start negotiations between the militia groups. “In the meantime, general humanitarian activity continues,” Hua Jiang said at a press briefing. “War-wounded patients at the UN clinic in Bunia town have been transferred to the medical facility at the airport. There have been no new war-wounded patients since Tuesday.”

In related news, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) said the refugee influx from the DRC into western Uganda has subsided, with no significant new arrivals reported in the last week.

The last major group of refugees – estimated at 1,500 – arrived in Uganda on 20 May, when they followed that country's troops returning from the DRC's Ituri district.

UNHCR said the majority of the refugees, mainly ethnic Alur who are found on both sides of the border, were opting to stay with friends and relatives rather than being moved to the government-designated refugee settlement. The agency immediately arranged for the transfer of some 17 refugees who were willing to go to the settlement.

On Monday, the Ugandan Government and UNHCR plan to assess the numbers of refugees willing to relocate to settlements, and to make logistical arrangements for their transfer.