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AFRICA/CONGO DR - The forgotten conflict in Masisi: The complaint of the Jesuit Refugee Service

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) - Over the past six months the forces of MONUSCO (United Nations Mission in Congo) have supported the Congolese army against the March 23 Movement (M23) in the district of Rutshuru in North Kivu (eastern Democratic Republic of Congo). But in doing so - says a note sent to Fides Agency by the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) - army and MONUSCO have left several areas of the neighboring district of Masisi without protection, allowing complete freedom of movement to rebel groups, some of which are officially M23 allies."

In the last 6 months, more than 320,000 people have been forced to go to North Kivu. "Although the majority of the displaced are the result of the conflict between the government and the M23 in the Rutshuru district, many others have been forced to flee because of violence in the Masisi," the statement said.

"This fact - says a member of the JRS who works in Masisi – has caused an unjustifiable lack of protection for the population of the Masisi district. The population feels abandoned by MONUSCO which has failed to fulfill its task."

The JRS emphasizes that its field teams have direct evidence of the consequences of the clashes in the region. "In addition to the victims, violence leaves the most vulnerable people, women, children, elderly, sick and disabled, without assistance on behalf of humanitarian organizations or other members of their communities." (L.M.)

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