



AFRICA/CONGO DR - Tensions in North Kivu on the eve of Ban Ki-moon's visit

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) - More than 30,000 refugees in camps in North Kivu (eastern DRC) have fled because of the fighting between the Congolese army and the rebels of the M23. This was stated by sources of the UN High Commission for Refugees.

The fighting broke out on May 20 in the area of Mutaho, about 12 km from Goma. The two sides accuse each other of having caused the new wave of violence, on the eve of UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon's visit in North Kivu, scheduled for today, May 23. Ban Ki-moon yesterday met President Joseph Kabila in Kinshasa to discuss in particular of the current deployment of the UN brigade in the area. This unit, consisting of 3,000 South African, Malawian and Tanzanian troops, is responsible for providing direct support to the UN Mission for the stabilization of the DRC (MONUSCO) in disarming rebel groups operating in North Kivu. The government of Kinshasa accuses the M23 of having have provoked new fighting to prevent the deployment of the brigade. The rebels deny the charges and said they were willing to cease hostilities immediately to facilitate the visit of the UN Secretary General.

The M23 is not the only group responsible for the instability in the area, where in fact different militias and criminal organizations act. Not only has fighting started again near Goma, in the Butembo area, also 5 truck drivers were kidnapped (3 of whom are Kenyans) along the road Butembo-Beni. According to the newspaper "Le Potentiel" the group of kidnapers is formed by some soldiers of the regular army and police. Unfortunately, there is a high number of kidnappings in the area. There are three Assumptionist Fathers who were kidnapped last October and of whom there is no news (see Fides 22/10/2012 and 22/01/2013). (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 23/05/2013)