



Congo Peace Network

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Democratic Republic of Congo



INVESTIGATION REPORT-AUGUST 2026

**Chien-Méchant, the Provincial
Assembly, Mont-Goma, and the
Munzenze Prison**

EXECUTION CENTERS



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I. Summary

Congo Peace Network (CPN) investigated serious cases of human rights violations in the city of Goma and its surrounding areas during the period from December¹, 2025 to August 30, 2026.

Congo Peace Network has already published an initial report on the events of December 23, 2025, related to the protests in the city of Sake. This report, titled “The Victims of December 23, 2025”¹, was shared exclusively with human rights organizations and diplomats around the world. It documented more than 40 cases of abductions, torture, inhumane treatment, executions, and illegal detentions of individuals suspected of having incited the population of the town of Sake to protest against the AFC/M23 rebellion and demand the withdrawal of the Rwandan army from Congolese territory. Of these 40 people, the majority were young people, merchants, and activists. The most fortunate had vanished without a trace; the next luckiest were being held in secret dungeons; and the least fortunate were executed². Following advocacy and mobilization by human rights defenders, all detainees were released beginning on January 8, 2026.

This second report, titled “**CHIEN-MECHANT, THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY, MONT-GOMA, AND THE MUNZENZE PRISON: THE EXECUTION CENTERS,**” is produced against a backdrop of repression and secret executions of individuals suspected of opposing the presence and ideology of the AFC/M23, with the support of the Rwandan army. The victims include civilians, FARDC soldiers, members of Wazalendos, and others.

Chien-méchant³, the Provincial Assembly, and Mont-Goma⁴ are transit centers leading either to life or to death: Those who still have divine grace are transferred

¹ First list of victims linked to the foiled popular protests of December 23, 2025, in support of the AFC/M23 rebellion backed by Rwanda in the town of Sake, in Masisi Territory, North Kivu Province.

² This report is available upon request.

³ “Chien méchant” refers to the former coordination office of the National Intelligence Agency in North Kivu, located in the city of Goma, and was so named during the rebellion of the Rassemblement des Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD), which was supported by Rwanda.

⁴ Satellite data: https://www.google.com/maps/place/Agence+Nationale+de+Renseignements/@-1.6976327,29.2363787,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m6!3m5!1s0x19dd0583e9fc1023:0xfb099d1e7b3e58d4!8m2!3d-1.6976381!4d29.2389536!16s%2Fg%2F1hm5q6zj5?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgovMDI2MDgxMi4wIKXMDSOASAFAQAw%3D%3D; https://www.google.com/maps/place/Assembl%C3%A9e+Provinciale+Nord-Kivu/@-1.6721956,29.1994048,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m6!3m5!1s0x19dd0f314497bcd1:0x17422d89af3957dc!8m2!3d-1.672201!4d29.2019797!16s%2Fg%2F11c1t50cv5?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgovMDI2MDgxMi4wIKXMDSOASAFAQAw%3D%3D and <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Mont+Goma/@-1.6819735,29.222998,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m6!3m5!1s0x19dd0f5dcd608be7:0xbe01a57d9feae05c!8m2!3d->

to the central prison in Munzenze⁵ ; those destined for execution are held on site or transferred to Tshanzu⁶ , to the detention center of the North Kivu Provincial Assembly, or to Mont-Goma. Previously, the bodies of those executed were thrown into Lake Kivu to make it appear as though they had drowned, but after the public began to view these drownings as suspicious, rebel leaders, since the end of February 2026, have begun either dumping the bodies into mass graves located in Tshanzu or cremating them to erase all traces of evidence.

The bodies are referred to as “**sardines**,” a code name for detainees who died in prison cells—either from suffocation or waterborne diseases—because of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

In the “dog-cage” prison, men and women are separated into different cells. Men are held in a 2/8-meter cell called “**EKOBOLO**,” while women are held in another cell in the basement that is difficult to access. Living conditions in these prison cells resemble those in Nazi concentration camps. Detainees relieve themselves on the spot in buckets, just as Nelson Mandela did in Robben Island Prison, where he was held for 18 years. Men sometimes sleep standing up before certain detainees are transferred to other detention facilities or execution sites. Both women and men are allowed only one meal a day, served around 6:00 p.m. local time. Each person is served one ladleful of corn kernels with ½ liter of water, as families are not allowed to visit or bring food to detainees at Chien-Méchant, the Provincial Assembly, and Mont-Goma, where access is prohibited unless expressly authorized by the military intelligence commander, the infamous **John Imani Nzenze** and his deputy, **Colonel Basile Kinyata**, head of intelligence for the AFC/M23 in North Kivu. According to testimonies from some detainees, between midnight and 3 a.m., they hear women screaming from their cells at Chien-Méchant, and according to them, some guards at the facility have reported that these screams are linked to acts of torture and rape.

One of the individuals released on bail told Congo Peace Network that they are detained in “concentration centers where death is a privilege.” Indeed, according to some accounts, some people have died of suffocation due to a lack of air in their

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⁵ In other words, their family members were alerted earlier and pleaded on their behalf. As a result, the rebel leaders are demanding a lump-sum payment from the family so that their relative can be transferred from the “dog-bite” prison to the Munzenze Central Prison, where the family can visit him and bring him food, and hope that he will one day be released.

⁶ Tshanzu is the AFC/M23 headquarters.

cells, while others have attempted or committed suicide because, for them, “**death was a form of freedom.**”

II. Methodology

This report is published as part of the investigations conducted by **Congo Peace Network** teams during the period from December 31, 2025, to August 30, 2026. Interviews were conducted with about fifteen detainees held in cells located within the premises of the North Kivu Provincial Assembly, the former office of the National Intelligence Agency (ANR, known as “chien-méchant”), Mont-Goma, and the Goma Central Prison (Munzenze). **Congo Peace Network** also spoke with about ten families whose members have been missing since the Rwandan army, in support of the AFC/M23, seized the city of Goma and its surroundings on January 27, 2025.

III. Description of the Events

1. Enforced Disappearances

Congo Peace Network investigated about ten cases of enforced disappearances. According to testimonies from some of the victims’ families, they have lost contact with their family members for 4 or 6 months, a year, or even longer. The only thing they know is that some of their family members were arrested in their homes during curfews, while others left one morning and never returned home. Despite their searches, they have found no trace of them. Out of fear of being arrested themselves, some families have given up the search, without knowing the fate of their loved ones.

The Congo Peace Network spoke with several former detainees from “Chien-méchant,” the “Provincial Assembly,” and “Mont-Goma.” One of them testified that when he was arrested and taken to the Chien-méchant detention center: *“I was placed in a 2/8-meter cell called EBOLOKO; where I found more than 158 detainees. I was recognized by one of the detainees, who was the son of my neighbor—a man we had been searching for over a year without finding any trace of him. It took me more than 30 minutes to recognize him, because he had been so transformed by the cruel conditions of detention in that cell. I was the one who informed his family of his place of detention. During my stay at EBOLOKO, I witnessed the deaths of more than 10 detainees from suffocation due to the heat, as the cell was overcrowded and poorly ventilated; others died from starvation and waterborne diseases.”* That being the case, the family had begun taking steps

with the rebel leaders to secure either the release or the transfer of their son to a safe place where he could enjoy his fundamental rights. One family member told **Congo Peace Network** investigators that ***“AFC/M23 leaders demanded a lump-sum payment for the transfer of their relative to the central prison in Goma, known as Munzenze Prison; that’s a miracle.”***

The **Congo Peace Network** spoke with other former detainees of “Chien-Méchant” and the Provincial Assembly, who stated that: ***“Often, those destined to die are taken from their cells between 10 p.m. and midnight, local time.” These cases are often considered serious by rebel leaders. Very often, they involve FARDC soldiers, Wazalendo fighters, or other civilians suspected of treason or collaboration with the enemy.*** These accounts further noted that ***“in such cases, the prison guards report that these people are taken either to Tshanzu or to Lake Kivu to be executed on the orders of General Sultani Makenga, chief of staff of the rebellion’s armed wing, or Colonel Imani Nzenze, head of military intelligence.”***

Three detainees from the Provincial Assembly and Mont-Goma detention centers told the **Congo Peace Network** that: ***“At the Provincial Assembly, people are held in shipping containers. During the rainy season, when it gets very hot, life inside these containers is like being in a sauna. We have seen detainees die from suffocation due to a lack of air.” At Mont-Goma, people are held in an underground cell dug into the mountaintop located in the heart of the city of Goma, on the shores of Lake Kivu. In this dungeon, detainees relieve themselves in 20-liter cans with the tops cut off. They are allowed to have one meal a day consisting of corn kernels mixed with beans, which is served between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. local time. In these dungeons, detainees are subjected to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. They are whipped in the morning between 4:00 and 5:00 a.m. local time and between 6:00 and 8:00 p.m. local time. The “sardines”⁷ are collected at night between 10:00 p.m. and midnight local time and are either thrown into mass graves, into Lake Kivu, or incinerated.”***

2. Violence and Sexual Abuse Against Female Detainees

Women and men are held in separate cells. At Chien-Méchant, for example, women are held in a cell located in the basement and isolated from the rest of the world.

The **Congo Peace Network** collected testimonies from former detainees, who stated that: ***“Between midnight and 3 a.m. local time, we hear women screaming, some***

⁷ The code used by the AFC/M23 to refer to the bodies of female detainees who died in the dungeons.

of whom are crying out for help.” One witness stated that some “dog-handler” guards admitted to them that: “Some women, especially new detainees, are raped at night by M23/AFC fighters on the orders of their commanders.”

A witness, a former detainee, told the Congo Peace Network that: *“Around the last week of April 2026, the AFC/M23 intelligence services forcibly took an elderly woman—who ran a grocery store—into custody, accusing her of making statements against the rebels’ presence in the city. According to statements from rebel agents on the scene, the woman was denounced by a close associate and secret agent of the rebellion while she was selling goods at her grocery store located near Katindo on National Route 2 in the city of Goma. According to their accounts, the woman was complaining about the increase in taxes since the city of Goma was taken over. She reportedly even expressed her wish for the rebels to leave the city, as they were making life difficult for the population. The woman was then tortured, whipped, doused with water, and left half-naked in the “dog-pit” courtyard. After all this inhuman and cruel treatment, the AFC/M23 commander ordered his guards to throw her into the dungeon and use her as they pleased—which means he authorized her to be raped, as is the practice in this detention facility.”* An AFC/M23 fighter told the detainees: *“This woman was subjected to our rule all night long. Did you hear her screams? She’s beautiful and tastes good. We gave her a good going-over, and as long as she’s still here, she has to get used to it like the others. Besides, as long as we’re still in this city, she’ll belong to us here.”*

3. Extrajudicial Executions: From Lake Kivu to Incinerators and Sulfuric Acid: New Methods for Covering Up the Traces

Congo Peace Network has gathered information on the methods used by the AFC/M23 rebellion to carry out assassinations, executions, and the cover-up of crimes. Some detainees told the Congo Peace Network: *“When we arrived here at ‘Chien-Méchant’ and the Provincial Assembly, some detainees were taken from their cells during the night and brought to an unknown destination. In the morning, M23/AFC fighters informed us that we would never see our fellow detainees again, because they had been executed that night.”*

According to information gathered by the Congo Peace Network, *“the bodies were either thrown into Lake Kivu or buried in a mass grave in Tshanzu. However, since February 2026, public attention has begun to focus on this issue, so the bodies are no longer being thrown into the lake or buried in mass graves. According to*

statements from some witnesses, including rebel fighters, their leaders have ordered that the bodies be cremated or dissolved in sulfuric acid to eliminate all traces. Some bodies are reportedly cremated on the outskirts of the city of Goma, at sites set up by the rebels, particularly in Nyiragongo territory, in the Bulengo neighborhood of Kinyogote, and in the Katindo neighborhood of the Goma commune. Others are cremated or dissolved in Tshanzu.” The same source states, *“It is often FARDC soldiers arrested in Goma and on the front lines, Wazalendo fighters, and others who are executed in Tshanzu. As for political opponents, civilians complicit with the enemy, and other offenders, the majority are executed at sites around the city of Goma.”*

4. Inhuman, cruel, and degrading treatment

Former inmates at Chien-Méchant, Mont-Goma, and the Provincial Assembly told the Congo Peace Network that: *“Inmates are subjected to cruel and inhumane treatment. For example, detainees are subjected to flogging twice a day, from 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. after visiting hours and at 4:00 a.m. before visiting hours.”* According to these same accounts, *some detainees still bear the scars of torture and inhumane treatment on their bodies. Others, unfortunately, have died as a result.”*

According to the same sources, some detainees have died of malnutrition. Some former detainees told the Congo Peace Network: *“Detainees eat once a day. They are served a meal between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. consisting of one ladleful of corn kernels and ½ liter of water.”* The detainees’ families are not allowed to bring food to their loved ones, even when it has been confirmed that they are being held in the rebels’ detention cells. *Family visits are permitted only in exceptional cases, when families are informed of their relatives’ detention upon payment of a lump-sum fee demanded by rebel leaders and in order to obtain authorization for their relatives to be transferred to another detention facility, such as Munzenze Prison, where they can begin visiting them and bringing them food.”*

IV. Conclusion

Investigations conducted in the city of Goma and its surrounding areas during the period from December 31, 2025, to August 30, 2026, have established, with a high degree of certainty, the facts regarding serious human rights violations committed by the Rwanda-backed AFC/M23 rebel group.

The documented evidence reveals a pattern of violations characterized by enforced disappearances, abductions, rape of women, extrajudicial executions, and inhuman, cruel, and degrading treatment. These violations, although varied in form, occur within the context of the absence of state authority, persistent insecurity, and the lack of credible judicial mechanisms, all of which facilitate their commission. Detention facilities in the city of Goma and its surroundings—including the Provincial Assembly, Chien-méchant, and Mont-Goma—have become veritable killing centers, a situation that is exacerbated by the inaction and powerlessness of national, regional, and international human rights mechanisms.

The testimonies collected show that people in areas occupied by the AFC/M23 live in a climate of fear and threats.

The evidence analyzed points to the existence of a policy of repression implemented in areas under the control of the AFC/M23—with support from Rwanda—against civilians, as well as political and military opponents.

Given the gravity of the facts as described, it is essential that the international community take decisive action commensurate with the severity of the situation to combat impunity for human rights violations in detention centers and dungeons in areas under the control of the AFC/M23 rebellion.

V. Recommendations:

To the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is urged to:

- Strengthen the protection of civilians in areas illegally occupied by the AFC rebellion with the support of the Rwandan army.
- Launch independent criminal investigations to establish the criminal liability of those responsible for human rights violations in areas under AFC/M23 control.
- Identify all victims of human rights violations in areas under AFC/M23 control with a view to ensuring justice, reparations, and rehabilitation.

To the United Nations Security Council

The United Nations Security Council is called upon to:

- Provide MONUSCO with adequate resources to implement Resolutions 2773 and 2808, particularly regarding the protection of civilians.
- Strengthen the capacities of MONUSCO's military and civilian units to enhance the protection of civilians in areas under the control of the AFC/M23 rebellion, with the support of Rwanda.
- Prevent human rights violations and support a mechanism for justice, truth, reparations, and restoration in areas affected by the activities of the AFC/M23 rebel coalition, with the support of Rwanda.

To the African Union Commission

The African Union is invited to:

- Fully fulfill its role in leading and bringing to a successful conclusion the peace efforts within the framework of the Doha and Washington processes.
- Support MONUSCO in its mission to protect civilians in areas under the control of the AFC/M23 rebellion, with the support of Rwanda.
- Prevent human rights violations and support a mechanism for justice, truth, reparations, and restoration in areas affected by the activities of the AFC/M23 rebel coalition, with the support of Rwanda.

To Regional and International Partners

Regional and international partners are invited to:

- Support independent investigations by providing technical, logistical, and financial support to national, regional, and international mechanisms for investigating and combating impunity for serious human rights violations committed in eastern DRC.
- Strengthen programs to protect human rights defenders, establish early warning systems, and support civil society organizations in areas under the control of the AFC/M23 rebellion.

To Civil Society Organizations

Civil society organizations are invited to:

- Strengthen networking and community-based monitoring to document human rights violations and establish local alert committees.
- Conduct awareness-raising campaigns to inform communities about their rights and the mechanisms for protection and filing complaints.
- Strengthen advocacy efforts to mobilize the media, local leaders, and regional and international partners to demand action against impunity for human rights violations.