



KING'S ACADEMY MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2025

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

PRESIDENT RESEARCH PACKET

PRESIDENT: Farah Zureikat

**Protecting Women and Children from Armed Group Violence
in the DRC**





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President's letter:

Members of the Human Rights Council,

Our world today is one of forgotten voices and forgotten lives—communities wiped out by persecution, and the most vulnerable oppressed by violence. In Myanmar, the Rohingya minority is still rendered voiceless and stateless, denied their rights and displaced from their homeland. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, women and children are the hardest hit by armed conflict, experiencing unimaginable violence that destroys families and generations. While oceans apart, these crises have one common denominator: the refusal of humanity by those most needing protections.

You, as members of the Human Rights Council, have the sacred task of changing talking into doing. You are asked to meet injustice head-on, hold perpetrators of power abuses accountable, and open doors of hope for those told that there are none. It is not an easy task—it asks for empathy, tenacity, and vision. But it is through your discussions that this council can demonstrate to the world how it is that dignity is defended where it is least protected.

History has shown us that human rights are not saved by speech alone—that rights are saved by dedication, cooperation, and fortitude. You and each one of you has the potential to influence outcomes extending beyond this meeting, outcomes that speak to a potential world in which persecution is opposed, women and children are safeguarded, and every community, however marginalized, is granted a future. Make this session a testimony of your power as leaders and guardians of humanity.

Sincerely,

Farah Zureikat

President of the Human Rights Council



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Introduction:

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has endured decades of conflicts, particularly in the eastern provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri. Violence over land, power, and mineral competition has marred a country rich in natural resources. Armed groups and the state forces continue to clash, leaving the civilians-the women and children, in particular-to share the greatest burden.

In many situations, women are victims of sexual violence used as a weapon of war; children are abducted, forced into militias, denied access to education, and health care. Millions have become displaced, many of them living in very congested camps where few protection or basic services are available. Humanitarian agencies struggle to meet the needs of the survivors, and the culture of impunity for the perpetrators remains deep-rooted.

The international community must ask itself how to protect those most vulnerable, how to hold armed groups accountable for systematic abuse, and how to prevent another entire generation from succumbing to the ravages of conflict. The Human Rights Council has to work toward both urgent humanitarian intervention and long-term solutions for the protection of the rights of women and children in the DRC.



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Definition of key terms:

- **Child Soldier:**

Any person under 18 recruited or used by armed forces or armed groups, whether as a combatant, porter, messenger, or for sexual exploitation.

- **Internally Displaced Person (IDP):**

A person forced to flee their home due to violence or conflict but who remains within the borders of their country. Millions of IDPs live in camps across eastern DRC.

- **Impunity:**

The absence of accountability or punishment for crimes such as sexual violence or child recruitment, enabling these abuses to continue.

- **Protection of Civilians (PoC):**

Actions taken to safeguard non-combatants in conflict zones, such as humanitarian corridors, peacekeeping patrols, and safe zones.

- **MONUSCO (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC):**

The UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, tasked with protecting civilians, supporting stabilization, and helping to strengthen state institutions.

- **International Criminal Court (ICC):**

An international tribunal that prosecutes individuals for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. Several Congolese warlords have been tried and convicted by the ICC.

- **Displacement Camp:**

Temporary settlements that host internally displaced persons or refugees. In the DRC, these camps often lack adequate food, sanitation, and healthcare.

- **Humanitarian Assistance:**



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Aid provided to meet immediate needs during crises, including food, shelter, medical care, and education for displaced populations.

- **Recruitment by Armed Groups:**

The act of forcibly enlisting civilians, especially children, to serve as fighters, porters, or in other roles supporting armed conflict.

Major parties involved:

Armed Groups in Eastern DRC

Dozens of militias operate across North and South Kivu and Ituri-the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), various Mai-Mai groups, M23 rebels, and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). These groups are accountable for the perpetration of great atrocities such as sexual violence, abductions, killings, and child recruitment. Their presence becomes the main cause of insecurity for civilians.

FARDC (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo)

The Congolese national army is charged with fighting armed groups but has also been accused of committing abuses, including sexual violence against civilians. Poorly trained and lacking discipline while riddled with corruption, it has lost all effectiveness to win civilian trust in the state.

Women and Children (Civilian Population)

The principal victims of violence, women and girls undergo sexual slavery and forced marriages, leading to lasting trauma. Children are abducted and recruited partly to serve as fighters, porters, or to assist in exploitation. Millions are displaced and live in precarious situations without access to education or minimal healthcare.

Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

In Kinshasa, the central government has the primary responsibility to protect civilians, but it is crippled by weak governance, corruption, and limited reach in the eastern provinces. Its capacity to prosecute crimes against women and children remains limited.



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MONUSCO (United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in the DRC)

Being one of the largest and costliest peacekeeping missions, MONUSCO, with civilian protection and stabilization, has been criticized for not preventing massacres and for ineffectiveness, considering the breadth of crisis areas.

International Criminal Court (ICC)

The ICC has prosecuted several Congolese warlords for crimes such as sexual violence and the recruitment of child soldiers. Although these cases generated important precedents concerning accountability, they remain marginal in comparison with the scale of abuses.

Humanitarian Organizations (UNICEF, UNHCR, ICRC, NGOs)

These groups provide life-saving assistance to displaced populations in terms of food, healthcare, psychosocial support, and child protection, but they also document abuses. However, chronic underfunding and restricted access in the midst of the conflict render the work of these organizations back-breaking labor.

Donor States and the International Community (United States, European Union, African Union)

Western and regional actors provide humanitarian aid, MONUSCO funding, and diplomatic pressure for accountability. However, competing political interests and other global crises have limited sustained international attention to the suffering of women and children in the DRC.



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Timeline:

1950-1960 - The Independence Period and Early Instability

The Democratic Republic of Congo, free from Belgian dominance, would bring decades of coups d'état, dictatorship, and instability, leading to future conflicts.

1996-2003 - The Wars in Congo

Africa's world war was fought by armed groups with many armies, whose toll on the population reached millions in deaths. Scenes of sexual violence and conscription of children were mostly waged.

2002 - The Statue of Rome and ICC participation

The DRC is signing the Statue of the International Criminal Court, opening the gateway for the prosecution of war crimes or crimes against humanity that took place on its territory.

2006 - The first ICC Verdict for Child Soldiers

The first-ever verdict of the ICC brings the matter to the International Criminal Court to prosecute Thomas Lubanga, a Congolese militia leader, for recruiting and using children under 15 as soldiers.

2010 - Mass rapes in Walikale

More than 300 women and children are raped by armed groups attacking villages in North Kivu. This event strengthens the understanding of how sexual violence is still used as a weapon of war.

2012-2013 - The Rise of the M23 Rebellion

M23 takes over territories in North Kivu, which leads to mass displacements. There are claims of bulk recruitment of children and sexual violence.



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2014-2019 - ICC Prosecutions

The ICC held that one of its convicted ex-warlords, Bosco Ntaganda, committed war crimes that involved rape and sexual enslavement against civilians, establishing landmark accountability for crimes against women and children.

2018-2021 - Persistent Instability

It remains the largest UN peacekeeping operation despite the downsizing of MONUSCO. Across the east, several active armed groups launch raids on villages, procure children, and displace thousands.

2022 - Escalate Violence

With fresh fighting erupting in North Kivu and Ituri, heavy new displacements followed. In record levels, the UN verified that grave violations against children included killing, abduction, and recruitment.

2023-2025 - Humanitarian Crisis

Internal displaces somehow occur to about 6.4 million people mainly in the DRC. During one's stay of those implicated, mostly women and children, humanitarian agencies expect an increase in cases of sexual violence and malnutrition among children, while impunity prevails over the perpetrators.



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Implications:

Specifically, wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo are fought with the direct target of women and children. These armed conflicts have brought in sexual violence that destroys families, creates stigma among survivors, and destabilizes entire communities. The recruitment and abduction of children not only infringe on their childhoods but also perpetuate the cycle of violence; boys are coerced into becoming soldiers while girls turn into victims of exploitation. Such patterns deepen poverty, limit educational opportunities, and engender long-lasting trauma, which undermines the prospects for peace and development. The number of millions displaced puts enormous pressure on already vulnerable communities and camps where, more importantly, women and children endure very high risks associated with violence, hunger, and disease.

When it is allowed to continue without being called to the bar, not only would these violations produce immediate effects, but consequences would be far-reaching outside the conflict zones. Most likely, this generation will duplicate instability over decades, since children will not have education or protection as they grow up. The rampant impunity for crimes committed against women and children undermines international law and empowers the perpetrators who now commit these crimes believing they will have nothing to pay for them. The lack of capability in safety provision of the Congolese state and the international community to the most vulnerable calls into question the credibility of peacekeeping and human rights mechanisms worldwide. There is a humanitarian need as well as a test of world commitment to justice, accountability, and protection of civilians in addressing issues facing women and children in the DRC.



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“Food for thought”

- What immediate steps can the international community take to protect women and children in areas controlled by armed groups?
- How can humanitarian agencies expand access to medical and psychological care for survivors of sexual violence in remote and insecure regions?
- What role should MONUSCO and regional actors play in preventing the recruitment of children and protecting displaced families?
- How can the DRC government strengthen accountability when its own forces are sometimes implicated in abuses?
- Should perpetrators of sexual violence and child recruitment be prosecuted domestically, or should cases be prioritized at the International Criminal Court?
- What strategies could ensure that women and children in displacement camps receive education, healthcare, and livelihoods rather than remaining dependent on aid?
- How can donor states and international organizations ensure that humanitarian funding reaches the most vulnerable despite chronic underfunding?
- What preventive measures could stop the continued use of sexual violence as a weapon of war?
- How can local women-led and youth-led organizations be better supported to build community resilience in conflict-affected areas?
- What lessons can be drawn from other conflicts where women and children were deliberately targeted, such as in Rwanda or South Sudan?



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Proposed solutions

1. Calls on the United Nations, governments, and humanitarian groups to act quickly to protect women and children in eastern DRC;

a. Expanding emergency help in conflict areas by:

i. Setting up mobile clinics and safe spaces to give medical care, counseling, and support to survivors of sexual violence;

ii. Creating child protection programs for family reunification, rehabilitation of former child soldiers, and temporary schooling in camps;

iii. Giving more funding to UNICEF, UNFPA, and local women's groups to run protection projects in communities.

b. Strengthening MONUSCO's role by:

i. Sending special units to monitor and prevent sexual violence and child recruitment;

ii. Working with aid agencies to open safe routes for delivering food, medicine, and supplies;

iii. Training and supporting local community groups so they can protect civilians even after international actors leave.



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