

Rwanda concerned over 2,000 mercenaries in DR Congo, Kinshasa-backed FDLR

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Rwanda has raised concerns over more than 2,000 mercenaries from Eastern Europe working with DR Congo's armed forces and the FDLR genocidal militia to fight against M23.



Dr Vincent Biruta, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation during the diplomatic briefing on October 11. Courtesy

The issue was raised during the diplomatic briefing held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation on October 11.

Speaking about regional matters, Vincent Biruta, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and

International Cooperation, said that fighting has reignited, between the Kinshasa-backed coalition of illegal armed groups – which includes the FDLR – against the M23, following the Congolese Government's ultimatum ordering the M23 group to withdraw from all controlled territories or be met with force.



Members of the diplomatic corps accredited to Rwanda follow Dr Vincent Biruta, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation's remarks during a briefing session on Wednesday, October 11.

He shared concerns that the presence and

participation in the conflict of the more than 2, 000 mercenaries from Eastern Europe, together with the increasingly hostile rhetoric by Kinshasa, “*present a continued and heightened security threat to Rwanda.*”

He highlighted the selective implementation of the Luanda roadmap.

Whenever the issue of cantonment is raised, it concerns only one group and not the more than 200 armed groups currently active in Eastern DR Congo, he said.

He emphasized that FDLR must be cantoned and dismantled. The international community cannot claim to support the ongoing regional processes and, at the same time, minimise the threat posed by the Kinshasa-backed FDLR genocidal militia, he noted.

Biruta reiterated that Rwanda prioritises the security of its citizens and residents.

He said Rwanda will not initiate an escalation with the DR Congo. “*The defensive and preventive measures on Rwanda’s borders will*

remain in place should its security be endangered.”

He reaffirmed Rwanda’s commitment to the ongoing regional peace frameworks and called on the international partners to collaborate with the region and address the root causes of the crisis.

Meanwhile , The East African Community (EAC) has said it is “*deeply concerned*” by the escalation of hostilities by armed groups in eastern DR Congo, especially in the areas of operation of the bloc’s regional force.

In a statement on Thursday, October 12, EAC Secretary-General Peter Mathuki said there was “*deteriorating security situation*” in North Kivu province, where the Congolese army and a coalition of militias fight the M23 rebel group.

Mathuki said the hostilities “*stand in stark contrast to the envisioned peaceful resolution of the conflict through the EAC-Led Nairobi Process.*”