

Who are the killers of Beni?

Summary and recommendations

Since October 2014, the region around the town of Beni in north eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) has been the site of some of the worst massacres in the country's recent history. Over five hundred people have been killed and tens of thousands have fled their homes. The UN mission and the Congolese government have publicly stated that the massacres are the work of Ugandan rebels from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).

Research by the Congo Research Group (CRG) based on interviews conducted with over a hundred witnesses and local leaders indicates that the definition of the ADF needs to be revised. Rather than a foreign Islamist group driven by revenge, our research points to a group that has forged strong ties with local interest groups and militias over the course of twenty years of insurrection around Beni. Moreover, our preliminary findings indicate that responsibility does not lie with the ADF alone. In addition to commanders directly tied to the ADF, members of the *Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo* (FARDC), the national army; former members of the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie—Kisangani/Mouvement de libération* (RCD-K/ML); as well as members of communal militias have also been involved in attacks on the civilian population.

We cannot comment on the chain of command or motivation driving these groups, but it is clear that the Congolese government and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) have not put sufficient effort into addressing this crisis and have incorrectly identified the enemy. Despite losing hundreds of soldiers in operations conducted against the ADF prior to July 2014, the FARDC have frequently failed to react in time to protect the population during and after events—and MONUSCO has demonstrated a similar lack of initiative. Our researchers have documented cases in which FARDC officers discouraged their units from intervening during massacres and there is extensive evidence that members of the FARDC have actively participated in massacres.

Recommendations:

- The government should quickly appoint a special investigation led by a high-ranking military prosecutor to investigate the acts of violence committed around Beni since October 2014. The commission's findings should be made public;
- MONUSCO should conduct an investigation to determine who is responsible for the Beni massacres. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations should also review the performance of the mission with regard to these massacres;

- The Senate and National Assembly should create a joint investigative committee to identify political responsibility, in particular the role that leaders from within the security forces may have played in the massacres committed around Beni;
- The Congolese government should introduce a stabilization and security plan for the Beni region that involves the FARDC, local communities and MONUSCO. This plan should be implemented in the context of the provincial stabilization plan, in coordination with the Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (STAREC) and in accordance with the recommendations of the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy (I4S).

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Congo Research Group (CRG) is an independent and non-profit research project dedicated to the understanding of the violence affecting millions of Congolese. We carry out rigorous research on various aspects of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our work draws on a deep understanding of the social and historical dynamics at hand.

We are based at the Center on International Cooperation at New York University and work in collaboration with the Centre d'études politiques at the University of Kinshasa. All of our publications, blogs, and podcasts can be found at www.congoresearchgroup.org. We can be reached at congoresearchgroup@gmail.com.