

Tensions in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are reaching a boiling point, with Rwanda and the DRC locked in a bitter war of words as the M23 rebel group advances and peace efforts remain stalled.

This escalating conflict threatens to destabilize the entire region.

Responding to accusations of supporting the M23 rebels by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rwandan government spokesperson Yolande Makolo deflected blame onto the DRC alliance with FDLR.

She maintains that the existence of FDLR in DRC, operating with the support of Kinshasa, does not only threaten Rwanda's security but also the regions.

In a social media post on Tuesday February 20, she highlighted long-standing grievances like bad governance and ethnic discrimination within DR Congo as the true source of the conflict.

"No one knows more about the root causes" than France, she stated, implying France should be aware of the deeper issues fueling the violence.

However, Rwanda's claims of innocence are met with skepticism by the Congolese government.

They vehemently deny Rwanda's accusations of the FDLR integration into the Congolese army and insist that Rwanda is actively backing the M23 rebels.

"If the real issues were addressed," Makolo asserted, "the problem would not exist,"

However the Congolese government believes addressing Rwandan support for the M23 is crucial to ending the conflict.

Meanwhile, the situation on the ground is growing increasingly volatile. Recent M23 advances towards the regional capital Goma have raised alarm bells across the international community.

The resurgence of fighting and the stalled Luanda and Nairobi peace processes fuel concerns that the conflict could spiral into a wider regional crisis.

Adding to the tinderbox, Rwanda claims to face a "serious threat" from DR Congo

due to military build-up near their border and past threats of war from Congolese President Tshisekedi. Kigali asserts its right to self-defense and criticizes the Congolese offensive targeting M23 and Tutsi civilians.

The M23 rebel group, defeated in 2013 by SADC, re-emerged in November 2021, citing unfulfilled agreements by the Congolese government and continued persecution of Tutsi communities.

Their resurgence has reignited the long-standing tensions between the neighbors further complicating the search for a peaceful resolution.

With accusations swirling and regional instability looming, the international community faces a daunting task.

John Magenzi, a regional political analyst in Kampala , Uganda says that the blame game risks overshadowing root causes like historical tensions and resource exploitation. Addressing these issues is crucial for lasting peace.