

Talks between the Congolese government and the rebel group Congo River Alliance/M23 (AFC/M23) under Qatar mediation are expected to resume this week in Doha, sources say, as both sides aim to resolve a major sticking point: a prisoner exchange.

Despite preparations for the new round of negotiations, tensions remain high in North and South Kivu, where both government forces and rebels continue to strengthen their positions.

According to sources cited by Radio Okapi, the talks will focus on the prisoner swap, considered by the rebels as a key condition for any progress. A mechanism has been established giving the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) a neutral role in identifying, verifying, and facilitating the release of detainees.

However, no concrete breakthrough has yet been achieved. On the ground, the security situation remains precarious.

In North Kivu, about 7,000 fighters trained by the M23 completed their training at Tshanzu on Oct. 1. Two weeks earlier, a similar group had been presented at Rumangabo, including former FARDC soldiers and members of the Wazalendo armed group.

Several sources indicate that both sides may be preparing for potential offensives targeting strategic towns in North and South Kivu.

Civil society organizations have warned of the risk of renewed violence in the two provinces, highlighting the urgent need for a sustainable resolution to prevent further humanitarian crises.

The resumption of talks under Qatar mediation comes after previous rounds stalled over unresolved issues, particularly the release of prisoners and guarantees for the protection of civilians.

Observers say the outcome of this week's discussions could determine whether diplomatic channels can ease tensions or if the situation will escalate further in eastern DRC.

The negotiations also underscore the broader challenge of achieving lasting peace in a region that has experienced decades of conflict, displacement, and instability.