

In the early hours of Tuesday, November 5, 2024, the security forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) closed La Corniche border post, which connects Rwanda's Rubavu District to the city of Goma in the DRC. The closure caused significant disruption, but authorities confirmed that the nearby Petite Barrière border post remains open.

Mulindwa Prosper, the Mayor of Rubavu District confirmed the closure of La Corniche and reassured the public that the Petite Barrière post is operating normally. "It is true that the Grande Barrière (La Corniche) border has been closed, but Petite Barrière remain open and functioning as usual."

Mayor Mulindwa added that local authorities were still trying to understand the reasons behind the closure. "We are investigating the situation to determine if this is a temporary measure or if it will last longer," he noted.

The decision to close the La Corniche border was made unilaterally by the DRC authorities, with no prior consultation with Rwandan officials.

"This decision was not communicated through any official channels, so it cannot be said that the entire border has been closed," the mayor explained. "It appears to be a short-term issue, and we are hopeful that it will be resolved quickly."

Rubavu authorities have urged residents to continue using the Petite Barrière crossing and to adhere to health protocols, especially in light of ongoing concerns over the Marburg and MPOX outbreaks. Mayor Mulindwa emphasized the importance of maintaining hygiene standards, using clean water, and practicing proper sanitation.

The border between the cities of Goma and Gisenyi is a vital point of connection, with residents of Goma frequently crossing into Rwanda for shopping and business, and many Rwandans working in Goma. These border posts particularly Petite Barrière is the busiest crossings in Africa, previously estimated at more than 50,000 people crossing daily.

Sources in Goma reported that, as of this morning, workers and commuters who attempted to cross La Corniche were turned back by DRC police, who enforced the closure. "Since this morning, no one has been allowed to pass," said one resident working at Grande Barrière.

The reasons behind the closure of La Corniche have not been officially explained by the Congolese government, which has not yet issued a statement on the matter. However, relations between Rwanda and the DRC have been strained since the resurgence of the M23 rebel group in 2021, which has gained control of parts of North Kivu. Kinshasa has accused Rwanda of supporting M23, a charge that Rwanda denies, instead accusing the DRC of collaborating with the FDLR, a militia made up of individuals responsible for the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.