Kasopo, a town in the Osso Banyungu sector of Masisi territory (North Kivu), has been deserted after two days of violent clashes between M23 rebels and a coalition of local Wazalendo groups. The security situation remains volatile, with dire consequences for civilians, according to local sources.

Since Wednesday, September 10, 2025, Kasopo has faced a deepening humanitarian crisis. Thousands of residents fled en masse as fighting escalated between M23 rebels and Wazalendo militias, made up of fighters from the Congolese Action Movement (MAC), the APCLS, and Uhuru. Families have sought safety in the forest or in distant villages, abandoning their homes and livelihoods according to a report from UN radio Okapi.

Although relative calm returned on Thursday, September 11, fear still grips the population. Not a single resident has dared return to Kasopo, wary of renewed violence.

The town’s strategic position—serving as a junction between Masisi and Walikale territories—has made it the center of fierce fighting. On Wednesday, intense gunfire marked another bid for control, with Wazalendo forces retaking two of the four localities previously held by M23.

This pattern of territorial gains and losses has persisted since April 2025, leaving communities caught in the crossfire. The toll is severe: schools remain closed, fields lie abandoned, and local trade has ground to a halt, lamenting local leaders to UN radio.

The prolonged conflict continues to worsen hardship and insecurity in North Kivu. Humanitarian groups and community organizations are calling for urgent, lasting solutions to restore peace and enable the safe return of displaced families.

The M23 (March 23 Movement) is an armed rebel group operating mainly in North Kivu province in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Formed in April 2012 after a mutiny by former members of the CNDP (National Congress for the Defense of the People). They accused the government of failing to implement that deal, particularly promises of political integration and protection of Tutsi communities in eastern Congo.

The DRC government and the United Nations have repeatedly accused Rwanda of

backing M23 with weapons, intelligence, and troops. Rwanda denies this allegation.

Known for launching offensives to seize territory in North Kivu, particularly strategic towns and routes. They were briefly defeated in 2013 by a joint Congolese army–UN offensive, with many fighters fleeing to Uganda.

However, M23 re-emerged in late 2021, launching new attacks and capturing key areas, displacing hundreds of thousands of civilians.