

The government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has dismissed school fee decrees introduced in areas under the control of M23 rebels, describing them as illegal and exploitative.

A directive dated August 30 from North Kivu—where the rebel group maintains significant influence—outlined annual and quarterly tuition costs ranging between 24,000 Congolese francs (\$8.5) for nursery pupils and 30,000 francs (\$10.5) for secondary-level courses in fields such as commerce, agriculture, and industrial training.

Authorities in Kinshasa quickly condemned the move. In a September 3 statement, the Ministry of National Education reiterated that public primary education in the country remains free, a right protected by the constitution and described as “non-negotiable and irreversible.”

“No school may impose fees on parents of children in public primary institutions,” the ministry stressed, calling such demands unconstitutional and tantamount to ransom. It further assured that the central government would continue covering all operational expenses, teacher salaries, and associated premiums

Government spokesperson Patrick Muyaya directly accused the M23 of using the measure as a way to extort vulnerable families.

“The de facto occupiers of the M23 and the other coalition lack both legitimacy and authority to set tuition in the territories they control,” Muyaya said. “In their pursuit of loot, they are preying on already struggling parents by demanding payments that are the responsibility of the state.”