

A semblance of calm has descended upon the Mweso region, North Kivu after two days of clashes between the M23 rebel group, local armed groups, and the Congolese army (FARDC).

However, anxieties linger amidst the displaced population due to renewed fears of violence.

Fighting erupted near Mbuhi, Bukama, and Nyampanika on Wednesday evening and Thursday morning, drawing in local armed groups reportedly affiliated with the Mai-Mai Nyatura militia.

While unsuccessful in dislodging the M23 positions, the clashes rekindled fear among residents. Many had only recently returned home after seeking refuge during earlier outbreaks, which resulted in significant casualties and displacement.

The latest fighting has further exacerbated the dire humanitarian situation in Mweso. An estimated 85% of the city's population remains displaced, seeking shelter at the general hospital and Mweso parish.

The city and its surrounding areas remain firmly under M23 control, adding to the uncertainty and fear.

Last Thursday, tensions flared in the Karuba, Mushaki, and Musekera areas north of Sake, where FARDC airstrikes targeted suspected M23 positions. While a fragile calm holds there now, the wider North Kivu province remains a tinderbox of conflict.

The international community has expressed grave concern over the renewed clashes and their impact on civilians.

The United Nations and regional bodies like the African Union (AU) have urged all parties to de-escalate and prioritize peaceful dialogue. Calls for increased humanitarian aid and robust protection for displaced populations are also growing louder.

While the current lull offers a glimmer of hope, the situation in Mweso and across North Kivu remains highly volatile. Addressing the root causes of conflict, finding lasting solutions through inclusive dialogue, and ensuring the safety and well-being of civilians are crucial steps towards a more peaceful future for the region.