Rwanda has once again received 277 citizens, mostly women and children, who were freed from captivity under the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) militia in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The group, made up of 94 families, arrived on Tuesday through the La Corniche border post in Rubavu District. Among them were 177 children, 75 women, and 25 men, according to local officials.

Many of the returnees said they had spent years in fear, isolation, and misery under FDLR control. The militia, which opposes the Rwandan government, had reportedly spread false information claiming those who returned home would be killed or imprisoned.

“They told us people who went back to Rwanda were never seen again,” said one returnee. “We lived in fear, with no food or safety. Some women were raped, even the elderly.”

Another survivor described the despair of captivity, saying, “Life was unbearable — hunger, abuse, and hopelessness were our daily reality.”

Rubavu District Mayor Prosper Mulindwa, who received the group, said the government had prepared reintegration support to help them restart their lives.

“Each adult will receive $188, children under 18 will get $113, plus $45 worth of food assistance for three months,” Mulindwa said. “They will also benefit from national programs such as VUP, which supports vulnerable citizens to rebuild their livelihoods.”

Before arriving in Rwanda, the group had been staying at a temporary camp in Goma, after being rescued from various areas controlled by FDLR rebels. They will now spend a short reintegration period at the Kijote Transit Centre in Nyabihu District, where they will receive psychosocial care, medical support, and orientation before returning to their communities.

The repatriation followed agreements reached during a trilateral meeting held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on July 24, 2025, between Rwanda, the DRC, and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to facilitate the safe return of Rwandans held in militia zones.

Mulindwa said the government remains committed to ensuring that no Rwandan is

left behind.

“Our goal is to help every citizen regain safety, dignity, and the chance to rebuild their life in peace,” he said.