

Fierce clashes erupted on Monday between the Congolese army (FARDC) and the M23 rebel group near the town of Kanyabayonga in North Kivu province. The fighting, concentrated on multiple fronts, has displaced thousands of civilians and raised concerns about worsening security in the region.

In response to the escalating violence, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) announced increased support for the FARDC. This includes the deployment of the Nepalese rapid reaction battalion to reinforce the Kanyabayonga base. Lieutenant-Colonel Kedagni Mensah, spokesperson for MONUSCO, emphasized that this action aligns with the mission's mandate to protect civilians and provide humanitarian assistance.

Local sources reported a return to calm on Sunday afternoon after a day of intense fighting. However, clashes resumed early Monday morning around 4:00 AM local time. The M23 reportedly attempted to advance towards Kanyabayonga on two fronts but were repelled by the FARDC with support from MONUSCO's Intervention Brigade.

The M23 offensive has significantly deteriorated the humanitarian situation. Many civilians have fled their homes to escape the fighting, with some displaced students even having their exam centers relocated to ensure they can take their final exams.

MONUSCO's Malawian battalion is actively assisting displaced people by providing them with shelter, medical care, and safe passage.

Civil society groups in Rutshuru territory are urging authorities to allocate more resources to the FARDC to counter the rebel attacks and facilitate emergency humanitarian aid for the displaced population.

Kanyabayonga holds strategic importance due to its location, providing access to several key towns in the region. This strategic significance likely fuels the ongoing struggle for control of the area.

While MONUSCO's increased presence offers some hope for increased security and civilian protection, the call for more resources for the FARDC suggests a long and complex path towards achieving lasting peace in eastern DR Congo.