

Rwanda received 526 Congolese refugees on Friday, most of them women and children, fleeing intense fighting in Kamanyola and surrounding areas of South Kivu Province, officials said.

The refugees crossed at the Kamanyola border between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m., where authorities recorded their information while coordinating their reception, according to local officials. They join 199 refugees who arrived Thursday.

The violence in South Kivu escalated as a coalition of the Democratic Republic of Congo's Armed Forces (FARDC), Burundian troops, and allied forces launched attacks on areas controlled by the M23 rebel group in Katogota Sector, Uvira Territory, and Kamanyola, Walungu Territory. The clashes targeted National Road 5, which links Bukavu and Uvira.

Radio Okapi reported that as of Thursday, seven civilians had been killed and six others injured. Markets and schools were closed, and some residents were unable to flee.

Reports in Bugarama, Rusizi District, near the border, said residents fled after hearing large explosions. Reports indicate a Vodacom communications tower in Kamanyola was set on fire, and images of the damage have circulated on social media.

The M23 group continues to fight, firing in the Gurupoma area of Itara-Luvungi in Uvira Territory, according to local reports. The fighting began Wednesday, with artillery reportedly fired by both Burundian forces and FARDC units against M23-controlled areas.