Rwanda and the United Nations locked horns at the Human Rights Council this week after UN human rights chief Volker Türk accused Kigali of backing M23 rebels accused of committing grave abuses in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Presenting findings from a fact-finding mission, Türk alleged that M23 fighters, “supported by the Rwandan Defence Forces,” were responsible for massacres, abductions, torture, and sexual violence across North and South Kivu. He cited a July attack in Rutshuru where hundreds of mainly Hutu villagers were killed.

“Rwanda must cease all support to the M23 immediately and withdraw its forces from Congolese territory,” Türk said, warning that the risk of regional escalation was “higher than ever.”

The UN report documented more than 5,000 violations in Congo between June 2024 and May 2025— a 16 percent increase compared to the previous year. The report also blamed Congo’s army and allied Wazalendo militias for civilian killings, child recruitment, and sexual violence, alongside atrocities committed by the ADF in North Kivu and Ituri.

Rwanda’s Permanent Representative in Geneva, Ambassador Urujeni Bakuramutsa, dismissed the allegations as politically motivated and lacking credible proof.

“It is a red line, Mr. President, for my country to be accused of genocide without any legal basis,” she said, objecting strongly after the DRC’s human rights minister suggested Rwanda bore responsibility for genocide.

“It’s a red line, for my Country to be allegedly accused of genocide when we know that this is a criteria that international law guides. There’s no mechanism that has called for that, and I will not allow for that to be mentioned here in the UN premises and accept that this happens under your watch. I want you to please address this. It’s not an allegation that we will accept.”

“Rwanda will not accept being continuously subjected to baseless accusations,” she added. “Rigorous evidence is non-negotiable, and any breach of that standard will be challenged every single time.”

The heated exchange highlighted the deepening rift between Kigali and the UN over the M23 rebellion. While Kinshasa accuses Rwanda of orchestrating the insurgency,

Kigali insists Congo is scapegoating its internal governance failures.

Diplomats fear the dispute could complicate ongoing peace efforts under the Luanda and Nairobi processes, leaving civilians in eastern Congo exposed to violence from multiple armed groups.