



***Embargoed until Monday, 19 August 2024***

### **World Humanitarian Day 2024**

*Message from Bruno Lemarquis, Humanitarian Coordinator in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*

**Kinshasa, 19 August 2024-** Today, on 19 August, we commemorate World Humanitarian Day. We pay tribute to those who risk their lives to help the most vulnerable around the world. This year's commemoration takes on particular significance in the context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, given the escalation of attacks on civilians and humanitarian workers. Six humanitarian aid workers were killed and 11 kidnapped between January and June this year, with more than 200 incidents directly targeting humanitarians in the field.

The memory of our two colleagues killed on 30 June when groups of armed youths set fire to a humanitarian convoy in Butembo is still vivid in our minds. Under no circumstances should humanitarian workers be targeted.

In recent weeks, we have also witnessed a concerning upsurge in attacks by armed groups against civilians in the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu. Between January and July, more than 630 civilians were tragically killed in the territories of Mambasa and Irumu in Ituri, and in the territories of Béni and Lubero in North Kivu. These attacks have resulted in tens of thousands of people being displaced and the temporary suspension of humanitarian assistance in certain areas.

Despite the seriousness of these killings and suffering, the world has not shown enough outrage at this catastrophic situation. This lack of collective outrage, this tolerance of violence, raises profound questions about our humanity and our ability to prevent and act against the systematic violence claiming the lives of innocent civilians. This is why I call the crisis in the DRC, not only one of the most neglected in the world, but also one of the most tolerated. It is imperative that the voices of those who are suffering be listened to and heard, and that concrete measures be taken to stop this unbearable cycle of violence that has been going on for decades and to protect the most vulnerable.

We must not allow these violences to become accepted as normal. It is just unacceptable. This year, the theme for the World Humanitarian Day commemoration, "Act for Humanity", is a call to action.

We must act to protect civilians and humanitarian workers from violence; we must act against impunity for the perpetrators of attacks on humanitarian workers and civilians. We must act for peace.

When we fail to protect civilians and humanitarians, we fail to uphold the fundamentals of human rights, we fail to relieve the people in distress. This spiral of violence and suffering is destroying the foundations of social cohesion and peace. It is also destroying schools and health centres, depriving thousands of children of their right to education and entire communities to access vital healthcare.

In the first half of 2024, around 7.3 million people were displaced in the DRC. This corresponds to more than 400,000 new displaced people since December 2023.

The massive population displacement due to armed conflict, coupled with the resulting precarious living conditions, creates fertile ground for sexual violence against women and girls and for survival sex, as well as for the rapid spread of epidemics such as cholera, measles and mpox in the areas affected by violence.

Despite these challenges, the United Nations and local and international NGOs remain committed than ever to providing the necessary aid to those affected by these crises, in close coordination with the national authorities.

Yet, the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2024 is only 35 per cent funded as of today, which means that hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people are being left behind. We are extremely grateful to our partners and donors for their support, as we are aware of the multiple priorities at the global level. But we urge them to always do more.

During my recent field visits to Bunia, Djugu, Goma, Beni and Oicha, the hundreds of Congolese women and men I met asked for just one thing: Amani. Amani. Amani.

The Congolese people are tired of war. They want peace. Those who have been displaced want to go home and return to their normal lives, to farm their lands. The children want to go to school.

That said, while humanitarian assistance is essential to help the affected populations, it is not the solution to humanitarian problems.

We need to tackle the root causes of the conflict and its consecutive spiral violence and shattered lives. We need to empower the people and enable the DRC to fully get on track to development. It is imperative that:

- all stakeholders fully engage in the search for political solutions
- secondly, that every effort be made to tackle the root causes of conflict, in particular land issues, the illicit exploitation of natural resources and illicit financial flows
- and finally, that every effort be made to support the implementation of durable solutions for displaced people wherever possible and to operationalise the triple nexus Humanitarian Development Peace to reduce humanitarian needs.

Together, let us act for humanity.

\*\*\*\*\*

**For more information, please contact:**

Carla Martinez, Head of Office, OCHA-DRC, +243817061223, [martinez14@un.org](mailto:martinez14@un.org)

Jean Jonas Tossa, Public Information Officer, +243817061220, [tossa4@un.org](mailto:tossa4@un.org),

Information products on the humanitarian situation in the DRC are available at [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)