

MONUSCO—Protection of Civilians: Three recommended improvements

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Although civilian protection is stated to be the highest priority of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, MONUSCO, the mission continually struggles to fulfill this mandate. Overall, the failure of the U.N. to deal with the FDLR, as a major factor in regional instability, allows for the eastern Congo crisis to fester. The optimal longer term alteration in MONUSCO's mandate would be to empower and support it, in coordination with other actors in the region, to end the FDLR threat along the lines of the Ituri "Artemis" model. Given MONUSCO's current mandate on civilian protection, however, this policy brief is focused only on making the existing operation a more successful one.

Problem: Despite changes in the mandate on civilian protection, MONUSCO remains too fixed in its bases to give adequate protection. Several incidents have shown that MONUSCO finds out about an attack too late or, worse, does not react quickly enough when it receives the information to stop the atrocities. These gaps have resulted in several massacres. Two recent examples illustrate the trend:

- **Kamananga:** On May 13, 2012, 37 people were killed in an FDLR attack in Kamananga village in South Kivu, including nine children. The MONUSCO base was less than 2km away, and troops could reportedly hear the shootings, yet a contingent only deployed to the village the day after the attacks. This resulted in significant anger from the local population, frustrated by the peacekeepers' inability to prevent the deaths. While Raia Mutomboki fighters shot at the MONUSCO local base, civilians threw stones. In response, the peacekeepers started shooting in the air to disperse the mob. The confrontation resulted in 11 U.N. peacekeepers being severely injured.
- **Luyuyu:** On January 2-3, 2012, the FDLR massacred 39 civilians in Luyuyu and Ngolombe villages in Shabunda, including a pregnant woman, causing mass displacement to Nzovu. The attacks occurred after MONUSCO contingents based in Shabunda had closed an MOB established in the area. MONUSCO only deployed to Luyuyu two days after the incident. To its credit, MONUSCO established a Temporary Operational Base two days after the incident to protect IDPs, but the time gap was too late to stop the massacre.

The Enough Project recommends the following amendments to MONUSCO's next mandate, in order to increase the peacekeeping mission's protection strategy:

- **MONUSCO should deploy an early warning human rights monitoring service based in vulnerable communities to report incidents in real time as they happen.** This service should be well resourced and include at least 10 people for each of the 16 territories in the Kivus. The UNHCR Protection Monitors program and the Community Liaison Assistance Program in North and South Kivu have been good first steps but are vastly understaffed and are not sufficiently deployed in communities. They are a critical source of human rights information in difficult to reach communities. The UNHCR program was cut this year but, on the contrary, must be expanded, given the serious protection gaps. The early warning service should be in constant communication with MONUSCO contingents in the area to ensure that the protection mechanisms succeed. Significantly increased numbers of monitors are needed to provide alerts and information to MONUSCO bases.
- **MONUSCO should improve patrols to go out into communities and not just stick to primary roads.** MONUSCO patrols currently stay on main roads and away from the most vulnerable communities. The UNSC should emphasize that patrols should venture into communities where attacks are likely to occur, rather than staying on roads where militia fighters are less likely to operate.
- **MONUSCO should have rapid reaction Joint Protection Teams deployed at forward bases, to be sent to communities immediately following the report of an incident.** Currently, the Joint Protection Teams only go to rural areas approximately once every three months and normally do not venture into communities.