

Alert n° 6

The right of voluntary return for Congolese refugees must be preserved by the Government of Burundi and UNHCR.

Within the framework of **UMUSEKE** program, human rights organizations, the Burundian League for Human Rights Iteka and King Umurundi Freedom continue to document the humanitarian situation of Congolese refugees who have fled the crisis shaking the East of the DRC.

In continuation of the previous alert and other communications in our weekly communications, our organizations welcome and encourage ongoing exchanges between UNHCR, its partners, and Congolese refugees at the Busuma site, and more specifically the meeting of April 14, 2026, which led to a provisional schedule of the first voluntary return convoys involving about 700 Congolese refugees and which stopped the strike that had been planned and could have been bloody. This is a very important step for refugees who were tired of the exorbitant payments demanded by the police and the Imbonerakure for refugees trying to return on their own. The Burundian Human Rights League Iteka and King Umurundi Freedom wish to emphasize that another meeting on the arrangements for voluntary returns had taken place last month, and refugees who wished to do so had been asked to start registering with HCR agents.

For the respect of the rights of these Congolese refugees as stipulated by the 1951 Geneva Convention ratified by Burundi, which preserves the right of voluntary return of refugees to their homeland in its first article and the right to freedom of movement (art. 26), the organizations Burundian League of Human Rights Iteka and King Umurundi Freedom recommend:

To the Government of Burundi, UNHCR and other partners at this site:

- To ensure that the procedure to facilitate all Congolese refugees who wish to return to their country is in accordance with the Geneva Convention, other relevant international instruments, as well as the Constitution of Burundi;

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- Put an end to the extortion practices reported by various actors and punish the perpetrators

To the technical and financial partners of the Government of Burundi, including the UN, EU, and diplomatic missions accredited in Burundi

- To continue supporting the government of Burundi and its partners so that they can fulfill their duty of protecting and caring for these refugees;

To the Congolese refugees at the Busuma site and other sites in Burundi:

- To always prioritize dialogue with the responsible partners and respect the legal arrangements presented by these partners.

For the UMUSEKE program

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