

DRC: No Negotiation With M23 Rebels

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The Democratic Republic of Congo says it will not negotiate with rebel group M23, made up of former soldiers now fighting the army in North Kivu province.

Foreign Minister Raymond Tshibanda says his government does not want the group to survive or its actions to continue, so there is nothing to discuss or negotiate.

Tshibanda also downplayed suggestions that a “neutral force” be created to fight the rebels, saying Congo prefers U.N. peacekeepers to take a greater role.

Fighting between the government and M23 has displaced hundreds of thousands of people in North Kivu.

During a news conference late Wednesday (in Kampala, Uganda), Tshibanda repeated claims that Rwanda is actively supporting M23. He said any anti-rebel force cannot include Rwandan troops because, in his words, “Rwanda is a part of the problem.”

A United Nations report in June said there is strong evidence that Rwanda is backing M23. Rwanda has denied the charge. Uganda has also denied allegations it supports the group.

M23 originated as another rebel group that was integrated into the army in 2009. It takes its name from a peace accord that the rebels say was violated by the government.

Since launching the insurgency in April, the group has won battles against Congolese troops and seized land in North Kivu province.

Congo's government has struggled for years to assert control over North Kivu and nearby provinces, which are home to many rebel and militia groups.