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INSECURITY IN THE CITY
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INSECURITY IN GOMA

EXPERIENCES, ACTORS
AND RESPONSES

RIFT VALLEY INSTITUTE
USALAMA PROJECT: INSECURITY IN THE CITY

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Insecurity in Goma

Experiences, actors and responses

MAARTEN HENDRIKS
AND KAREN BÜSCHER



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PO Box 52771 GPO, 00100 Nairobi, Kenya

THE USALAMA PROJECT

The RVI Usalama Project is a field-based, partner-driven research initiative examining armed groups and their influence on society in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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THE AUTHORS

Maarten Hendriks is a PhD student at the Conflict Research Group at Ghent University, Belgium. His ethnographic research focusses on practices of everyday policing by gangs and anti-gangs in the city of Goma, DRC. Karen Büscher is an Assistant Professor at Ghent University. Her area of research interest is the relationship between violent conflict and urbanization in the eastern DRC.

RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

Evariste Mahamba and Jean Baptiste Amani Kanze. Neither bears any responsibility for the contents of the report.

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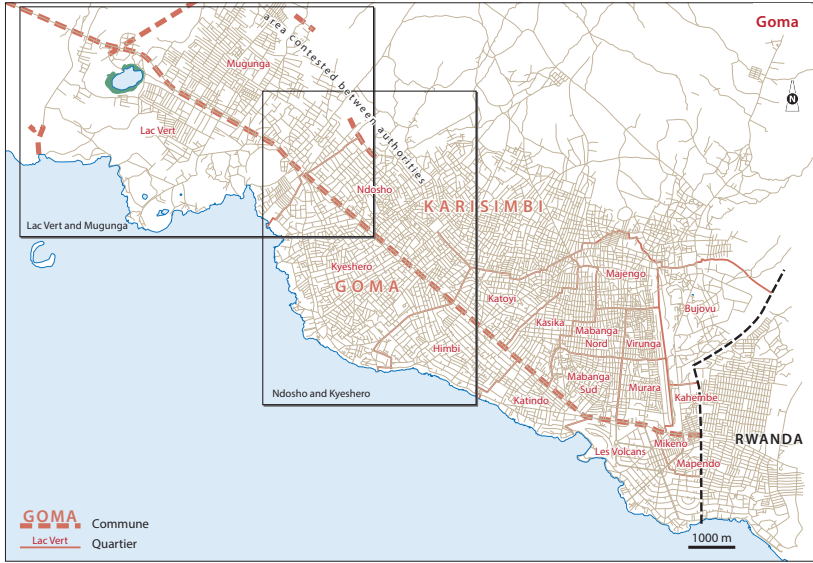
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COVER: A policeman patrols the area around a camp for internally displaced residents (IDPs) in Mugunga, near Goma.

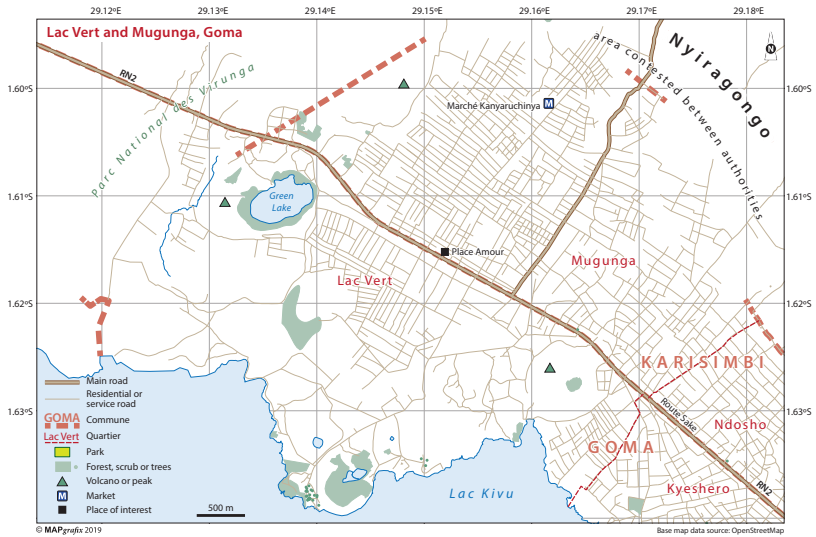
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Map 1. The city of Goma



Map 2. The neighbourhoods of Lac Vert and Mugunga, Goma



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Preface

The eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been mired in violence for two decades and continues to be plagued by rampant insecurity. Yet, the drivers of this insecurity remain poorly understood. The Rift Valley Institute's Usalama Project (Usalama means 'safety' or 'security' in Swahili) is a field-based, partner-driven research initiative that aims to examine dynamics of conflict and violence and their effects on Congolese society.

The first phase of the Usalama Project (2012–2013) focused on 'understanding armed groups' while the second phase (2015–2016) investigated 'governance in conflict'. The third phase (2018–2019) explores 'insecurity in the city' and the role of state and non-state actors in the provision of security, and citizens' perceptions of, experiences with and responses to insecurity. The third phase was carried out in partnership with the Bukavu-based *Groupe d'Etudes sur les Conflits et la Sécurité Humaine* (GEC-SH). The project is guided by a series of questions: Who are the main agents of security and insecurity in the city? What are the drivers, logics and trends of urban insecurity? What are residents' perceptions of insecurity? And how do they deal with insecurity in their everyday lives?

The project takes a primarily qualitative approach, drawing on extensive fieldwork by both international and Congolese researchers. Fieldwork for this report took place between March and April 2019. A total of 28 interviews and 12 focus group discussions were conducted in Goma, complimented by the author's previous research, and desk-based research with a variety of academic, government, media and NGO resources. Many of the interviews for this report were conducted on condition of anonymity. Therefore, identifying information is limited to a neutral indicator with a location and a date, e.g. Usalama Project III interview with police officer, Goma, 25 March 2019. In the

course of the research, accounts of potentially disputed events were confirmed by multiple sources with first-hand knowledge of the events under discussion.

The 'Insecurity in the City' phase of the Usalama Project is part of the Solutions for Peace and Recovery Project (SPR), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Summary

- Goma, the largest city in North Kivu, is suffering from a rise in urban insecurity. Historically, insecurity has hit the city in waves, often associated with conflict dynamics in the wider region, and its history of occupation by rebel forces, both during and after the Congo Wars.
- Different forms of insecurity affect Goma than in the eastern DRC's rural areas, which have received most attention from researchers. The causes of insecurity fluctuate over time, but they are often related to political instability or the intensification of armed group activities in the city's rural hinterlands.
- Ndosho and Mugunga—the focus of this report—are neighbourhoods located on the western periphery of Goma, bordering Virunga National Park. They both harbour large populations of former IDPs and refugees, which has contributed to limited social cohesion within both neighbourhoods. They both also suffer from cycles of extreme insecurity.
- From the beginning of 2019, Goma in general, and Ndosho and Mugunga specifically, experienced dramatic levels of urban violence in an unstable post-election period as established patronage networks shifted. This was compounded by an economic crisis, which forced civilians and security personnel to seek alternative survival mechanisms, often criminal.
- Added to this, the *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR, Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda)—a Rwandan Hutu rebel group based in the eastern Congo—have allegedly increased activities in the city. However, dominant narratives around the involvement of the FDLR in violence and criminal activities should be treated with caution.
- The way residents perceive urban insecurity in Goma is

influenced through temporal and spatial dynamics. Daytime insecurity actors and processes are distinguished from those at night; and safety or danger are strongly associated with specific locations. In particular, the proximity of Virunga National Park is seen by Goma's residents as a central feature of their exposure to violence and insecurity.

- The impact of urban insecurity on social cohesion cannot be overstated; fear, suspicion and paranoia have been instilled in Ndosho and Mugunga, with people beginning to distrust their own families and friends.
- Civil society and community actions have emerged from the need for protection and safety. In Goma's current context of insecurity several community initiatives have developed in the form of neighbourhood alarm or alert systems, youth associations or self-defence groups. Numerous instances of—often violent—popular justice have also been documented.
- Goma residents have also expressed their outrage at recent violence through individual actions, including protest marches. Those that can afford to have left the worst affected neighbourhoods, or even the country, entirely.
- To address urban insecurity in Goma, the international community, Congolese and provincial authorities should consider the following:
 1. Put the urban issue on the security agenda by adapting existing knowledge and approaches, and moving beyond a conflict framework;
 2. Security personnel in peripheral neighbourhoods should be properly trained and equipped in order to effectively respond to insecurity, for example through the Congo's ongoing police reform;
 3. End impunity by disentangling the dependency between state security forces and criminals through a better

- understanding of the key interests at stake, combined with investments in the judiciary;
4. Address the urban dimension of armed group activities by understanding the city in its broader economic, political and military dynamics, which create a complex operational context for armed groups;
 5. Youth play an active role in community attempts to address insecurity and should be included in relevant programming to ensure proximity between urban residents and security providers.

1. Introduction

‘Ndosho used to be like paradise—if you compare it with what we experience today.’¹

Since the start of 2019, a series of murders, violent robberies and kidnappings have taken place in peripheral neighbourhoods of Goma, a city of around one million people in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (hereafter, DRC or the Congo). The rapid rise in violent crime has alarmed city residents and led to calls for the local government and security services to respond more effectively. There have also been a range of community and individual responses. While levels of urban insecurity may be higher in 2019 than ever before, urban crime and insecurity are not new phenomena in Goma.

Despite its reputation as a zone of security and protection—partly a consequence of the large police and military deployment combined with a UN and NGO presence—insecurity has long been an underappreciated part of everyday urban life. With academic and policy-related research generally focused on rural conflicts in the eastern Congo, insecurity in urban areas needs further investigation.

This report maps out the dynamics and experiences of, and responses to, urban insecurity in Goma, and its effects on social cohesion. First, it demonstrates that urban security levels fluctuate over time and are connected to broader political, economic and military dynamics in the region. Second, urban insecurity has a clear spatial component and is dependent on the characteristics of particular neighbourhoods. Third, urban insecurity has had a significant impact on social cohesion.

1 Usalama III Project focus group with female traders, Goma, 9 April 2019.

A general sense of fear, suspicion and paranoia has been instilled in some neighbourhoods, leading people to distrust their own families and friends. In response to this, civil society and community actors have emerged around the need for protection and safety. Finally, dominant narratives around the involvement of armed groups in urban violence have been used and reproduced for political interests.

The report makes the case for national and international policymakers to engage seriously with the urban dimension of insecurity in the eastern Congo. Cities represent important centres of state power, governance and decision-making. Moreover, they represent the operational ground for a wide range of civil society organizations and associational life. To understand the profound effects of militarization, displacement and violence on social cohesion in the DRC, urban dynamics should be taken into account.

2. A History of Violence

Founded in 1906 as a colonial administrative and military post on the Rwandan border, the presence of Lake Kivu to the south, and the Nyiragongo Volcano and the Virunga National Park to the north meant that the city of Goma could only grow westwards. As such, it has expanded as one horizontal urbanized stretch along the shore of Lake Kivu towards Masisi. Urban development in Goma followed a classic colonial planning scheme, with separate neighbourhoods for Europeans (*cit  europ enne*) and Congolese (*cit  indig ne*). The latter was limited to contemporary Birere—a crowded, popular neighbourhood located on the Rwandan border. The neighbourhoods for Europeans were located in the current city centre (the *quartier les Volcans*) and a part of the *quartier* of Himbi, which remain the most urbanized, secure and wealthy parts of the city.

Independence in June 1960 was followed by a period of violence and instability. During the Kanyarwanda War (1964–1966), Goma experienced high levels of insecurity.² The abolition of the residence permit—a colonial administrative mechanism aimed at controlling rural–urban migration—increased levels of insecurity in the countryside. Political instability in Rwanda led to a rapid increase in the number of Rwandans crossing the border, which resulted in rapid urbanization in Goma where many chose to stay.³

Between 1958 and 1970, Goma had an average annual growth of 14 per cent, which was exceptional compared to other Congolese cities at the time.⁴ Under President Mobutu Sese Seko (1965–1997),

2 Bucyalimwe Mararo Stanislas, 'Le Nord-Kivu Au Coeur de La Crise Congolaise', *L'Afrique Des Grands Lacs 2001–2002* (2002). Paris: Harmattan, 2002.

3 Karen B scher, 'Conflict, State Failure and Urban Transformation in the Eastern Congolese Periphery', PhD dissertation, Ghent University, Ghent, 2011, 60.

4 B scher, 'Conflict, State Failure and Urban Transformation'.

a small Banyarwanda (mainly Tutsi) elite gained considerable political and economic influence, and invested extensively in land and property. New neighbourhoods were developed and the construction of an international airport further boosted the regional importance of the city.⁵

During the 1970s and 1980s, the city experienced an influx of people from Bukavu, for whom life in Goma seemed much cheaper and employment opportunities were greater—a trend that continues in 2019. Informal transborder trade further strengthened the urban politico-economic elite and reinforced the eastward orientation of the city.⁶ It was during this period that Goma evolved from a peripheral city into a major political and economic hub in the Great Lakes Region.

The violence that marked the Kivu provinces during the first half of the 1990s brought several waves of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Rwandan refugees to Goma, which increasingly became the regional city of refuge. Thousands of people fleeing the violence against Banyarwanda in Masisi and Rutshuru territories settled on the city periphery, creating land conflicts with the existing local population.⁷ The security situation in the city deteriorated, including intensified recruitment efforts by the Rwandan Patriotic Front, the Tutsi-led rebel force fighting the Habyarimana regime in Rwanda, which created tension and suspicion in the city.⁸

The refugee crisis that resulted from the Rwandan genocide

5 Anna Verhoeve: 'Conflict and the urban space: The socio-economic impact of conflict on the city of Goma', in *Conflict and Social Transformation in Eastern Congo*, eds. Koen Vlassenroot and Tim Raeymaekers, Ghent: Academia Press, 2004, 103-122.

6 Janet MacGaffey, *Entrepreneurs and Parasites: The Struggle for Indigenous Capitalism in Zaire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987; Mukohya Vwakyankazi, 'Import and Export in the Second Economy in North Kivu', in *The Real Economy of Zaire: The Contribution of Smuggling and Other Unofficial Activities to National Wealth*, ed. Janet MacGaffey, Oxford: James Currey, 1991, 43 - 71.

7 Mairie de Goma, 'Statistics annual report', Goma: Mairie de Goma, 1993.

8 Mairie de Goma 1993; Mairie de Goma, 'Statistics annual report', Goma: Mairie de Goma, 1994.

in 1994 brought an estimated one million—mainly Hutu—Rwandan refugees to eastern Congo. The majority settled in refugee camps around Goma. These camps were the scene of a profound humanitarian disaster and the source of heavy militarization and violence. These events completely destabilized the city for several months. At the same time, it was the start of the establishment of international humanitarian and development agencies in Goma, a trend which would evolve into one of the main industries in the city.

The Rwandan refugee crisis formed the beginning of a long period of civil war, violence and forced displacement. Within this context, the city of Goma played a number of roles: it became a centre for recruitment, a rebel headquarters, a zone of refuge, a node in the political economy of war and the main deployment base for UN peacekeeping forces in the region. The influx of IDPs partly explains the doubling of the population in Goma over a span of ten years from 320,000 inhabitants in 1999 to an estimated 700,000 in 2009.⁹

City of rebels

During the First Congolese War (1996–1997), Goma became one of the leading military centres of Laurent-Désiré Kabila's *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre* (AFDL, Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo), which chased President Mobutu from power in 1997. The AFDL violently dismantled the refugee camps around Goma, raising tensions and increasing violence in the city. The war also catalysed an economic crisis and led to the considerable inflation of food prices.¹⁰ In addition, the war increased Rwandan influence in Goma, which continued to grow during the Second Congolese

9 Büscher, 'Conflict, State Failure'.

10 Mairie de Goma, 'Statistics annual report', Goma: Mairie de Goma, 1997.

War (1998–2003), when the city became the major headquarters of the Rwandan-backed *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD, Congolese Rally for Democracy) rebellion. During the Second Congolese War, Goma became a rebel capital that was administratively and politically cut off from Kinshasa and under the control of a military-economic elite.

Despite the peace agreements in 2002, Goma did not shed its association with rebellion. In 2008, the city became the target of the *Congrès national pour la défense du peuple* (CNDP, National Congress for the Defence of the People), a Tutsi rebel movement led by Laurent Nkunda. Between 2007 and 2013, fighting between the CNDP—and later its successor, the *Mouvement du 23 mars* (M23, March 23 Movement)—and the Congolese army resulted in numerous influxes of IDPs, who settled in several camps in the Goma's peripheries. For both the CNDP and the M23, Goma functioned as an urban recruitment base and a safe haven, in which rebel leaders could circulate freely, invest in real estate, petrol and other businesses, and develop a steady taxation base.¹¹

In November 2012, when the M23 briefly occupied Goma, its inhabitants experienced ten days of lootings and executions during which most economic activities ceased and people mostly stayed inside their homes.

More than 25 years of violent conflict have had a significant social, political and economic impact on Goma and its inhabitants. Increasing militarization also changed the geography of the city. A university student notes in 1999 how 'in Goma, the airport had turned into a military base, bars into rebels' meeting rooms, churches into conspiracy platforms and hotels into peace

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 11 Steward Andrew Scott, *Laurent Nkunda et La Rébellion Du Kivu*, Paris: Karthala, 2008; Karen Büscher, 'Urban Governance Beyond the State: Practices of Informal Urban Regulation in the City of Goma, Eastern D.R. Congo', *Urban Forum* 23/4 (2012): 483–99.

conference centres'.¹² The city is now the main headquarters of the *Mission de l'Organisation des Nations unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo* (MONUSCO, United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), which occupies large areas of the city. The presence of MONUSCO in Goma, however, has not prevented urban insecurity from being a permanent feature of everyday life.

Inter-ethnic dynamics

Conflict dynamics have impacted inter-ethnic relations in the city. Compared to its rural surroundings, Goma is a relatively cosmopolitan area, where various ethnic communities of the broader North and South Kivu region are represented in the economy and in politics. However, identity politics and the political contestation between Banyarwanda (Hutu and Tutsi) and autochthonous (Hunde, Nande, Tembo and Nyanga, among others) populations are also manifest in Goma.

When Goma functioned as the RCD rebel headquarters, the Banyarwanda political and economic elite was reinforced, controlling all main administrative posts and key economic sectors. Hutu still remain the ethnic majority in Goma (reinforced by the influx of refugees from Rwanda and IDPs from Masisi and Rutshuru) but their position of power in politics is being countered by the economic dominance of the Nande.¹³ The historical position of the Banyarwanda during different episodes of war in the broader region has further fuelled the autochthony discourse in Goma. From business activities to churches and university student associations, this political dichotomy translates into different

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12 Cécile Kavira Theza, 'Impact Des Guerres de Libération Sur Le Tourisme Dans La Ville de Goma', MA dissertation, Centre Universitaire de Kisangani, Extension Goma, 1999.

13 Karen Büscher, 'Urban Governance Beyond the State: Practices of Informal Urban Regulation in the City of Goma, Eastern D.R. Congo', *Urban Forum* 23/4 (2012): 483–499.

levels of urban society. This has not, however, resulted in spatial ethnic enclaves in Goma.

During times of violent conflict, Banyarwanda living in Goma are often suspected of collaboration with those rebel groups referred to as foreign aggressors, such as the M23 and the FDLR. In cases of urban violence, when the identity of the perpetrator is unknown, it is not uncommon to hear people speculate about them speaking Kinyarwanda, the language of Rwanda. Banyarwanda are also often accused, without evidence, in cases of kidnapping, which have been on the rise in recent years. Despite this, there is no evidence that a particular ethnic group is more involved in urban crime in Goma than others.

The connection between urban insecurity and the broader dynamics of violent conflict in the region is complex. Drivers of insecurity are unique, as issues such as the relation between identity and territory play out in different ways in rural compared to urban contexts. The two types of violence are thus different, although specific dynamics, such as the circulation of arms and the failed reintegration of soldiers, reinforce urban insecurity.

3. Experiences of Insecurity in Goma

In the eastern Congo, aspects of the wider Congolese urban context, including poverty, unemployment, exclusion, gentrification, poor functioning of the state security forces and a general situation of impunity—examined in greater detail elsewhere¹⁴—combine with the local context of ongoing violent conflict to create a uniquely insecure urban environment. Conflicts in the eastern Congo are characterized by militarization, the proliferation of armed groups and firearms (easily available to criminal networks),¹⁵ and the normalization of everyday violence. Although war dynamics do not explain urban insecurity as such, they do, however, reinforce the violent nature of urban crime.¹⁶ This peaked in the early part of 2019 with a series of violent robberies, kidnappings and killings. One such example is described below:

At 7 p.m. on 20 February 2019, a heavily pregnant young woman was in her kitchen in Ndosho when four armed men entered her house. One of them was dressed in a police uniform, another in an army uniform and the two others wore civilian clothes. They handcuffed the young

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14 Usalama Project III focus group with *association des jeunes*, Goma, 1 April 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society leader, Goma, 22 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with leader of CLPD, Goma, 29 March 2019. Filip de Boeck and Sammy Baloji, *Suturing the City: Living Together in Congo's Urban Worlds*, London: Autograph, 2016; Theodore Trefon, *Reinventing Order in the Congo: How People Respond to State Failure in Kinshasa*, London; New York; Kampala, Uganda: Zed Books Ltd, 2004.

15 Usalama Project III interview with leader of CLDP, Goma, 29 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with civil society leader, Goma, 25 March 2019; Usalama Project III focus group with *association des jeunes*, Goma, 1 April 2019. Police and army forces, sometimes assisted by MONUSCO regularly organize actions in urban neighbourhoods to search and collect illegally held weapons, but because of complicity between police forces and criminals, these actions are often only partly successful. Alexis Bouvy, 'Nous n'avons que nos yeux pour pleurer: Protection, insécurité et criminalité dans la ville de Goma, Nord Kivu', Oxfam GB, 2014 (unpublished).

16 Büscher, 'Conflict, State Failure'.

woman and asked for her money and phone. Because she was handcuffed, one of her children gave the phone to the armed robbers, while she told them where they could find USD 300 hidden in her bedroom. She was then taken outside. The armed men then announced that she was being kidnapped for a ransom of USD 10,000, which would be demanded from her husband.

After leaving the house with the young woman in tow, the four armed men then began shooting at random. They also went into houses and shops, and stole money and phones from passers-by. They stopped an elderly man and his wife on the street, asked why they were leaving in such a rush and then abruptly shot the wife dead. While kidnapping another girl in a nearby house, the criminals also killed her brother because he had tried to intervene. A man transporting charcoal likewise was summarily shot. In total, six people were killed and twelve kidnapped.

The young woman and the other kidnap victims were taken to Virunga National Park. Subsequently, the kidnappers took pity on the young woman because of her pregnancy and released her. The other kidnapped women were less fortunate. All of them were raped. In the end, the kidnap victims were all released after a ransom of USD 7,500 was paid. When asked if she thought this was a targeted killing, the young woman said in her opinion this was not the case because of the random nature of their violence and theft. She further indicated that the perpetrators were all young and spoke Kinyarwanda.¹⁷

The high level of violence and number of victims shocked people in Ndosho and Goma in general. The event also involved a number of forms of violence, including kidnapping, robbery, killing and rape. The perpetrators were allegedly Kinyarwanda-speaking and wore state security uniforms, a common

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17 Usalama Project III interview with female resident, Goma, 3 April 2019.

description that fits the narrative of foreign and state complicity. The victims being taken into Virunga National Park also fuelled the hypothesis of the involvement of armed groups. The event also highlights the often indiscriminate nature of urban violence and, in this case, the specific targeting of women.

While the victims of urban crime represent a cross-section of the population in the city, there is a clear socio-economic divide in terms of susceptibility to urban crime. The poor generally have less protection from patronage networks, no vehicles to drive their children to school and limited access to housing in secure neighbourhoods. Women, who often work as market vendors, mobile traders or in bars and restaurants, are also more exposed to everyday forms of urban insecurity, such as robberies and harassment.

Neighbourhoods of insecurity

From the start of 2019, the deadliest criminal incidents were concentrated in the neighbourhoods of Ndosho, Mugunga (the focus of this report)¹⁸ in Karisimbi commune on the western periphery of Goma and Majengo, a neighbourhood in the eastern periphery of Karisimbi. Twenty years ago, Ndosho was a sparsely inhabited peri-urban space, whereas at present it is situated in the midst of the city—a densely populated neighbourhood with myriad economic activities. Ndosho is known for its vibrant markets but also its *maisons de tolérance* (brothels) and high levels of crime. It has a diverse ethnic composition with a Hutu majority but is also inhabited by many Nande, Shi, Hunde, Tembo, Tutsi and others. Ndosho is characterized by high levels of inequality, which are visible in urban architectural disparities—from shacks

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 18 A recently published report based on a quantitative survey has confirmed these neighbourhoods to be the most insecure of Goma. Pole Institute, “Problématique de la recrudescence de l’insécurité dans la commune de Karisimbi”, Goma: Pole Institute, 2018.

to multi-story houses—in adjacent areas.

Mugunga, which is adjacent to Ndosho to the west, is a typical peri-urban space where rural and urban forms of administration, livelihoods, actors and identities merge. The neighbourhood inhabitants are mainly Hutu but several other ethnic communities are also present. Mugunga is known for having been the location of several large refugee camps in the aftermath of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, as well as large IDP camps during periods of intense fighting between the CNDP (and later M23) and the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC, Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo) in 2008–2010 and 2012–2013. Although the camps have been dismantled, the neighbourhood is characterized by a high number of former IDPs (Hunde and Hutu) who settled in Mugunga. Moreover, youth and former IDPs feel insecure due to stereotypes, such as being victims of insecurity but also being alleged to be involved in insecurity. For example, a group of former IDPs explained how they are sometimes ‘seen as terrorists, because originating from those zones where the rebels operate.’¹⁹

Both Ndosho and Mugunga border Virunga National Park to the north and the main road to Sake to the south, dividing the Goma and Karisimbi communes. During the day, most of the mobility and commercial activities are centred around this main road, at different axes or junctions where markets or transport stations are located. Many inhabitants of Mugunga, including bandits and *maibobo* (street children), spend the day in Ndosho, which offers more commercial opportunities. When people talk about insecurity in their neighbourhood, they make a clear distinction between day and night. Ndosho by night is different from Ndosho by day. During the day, experiences of insecurity are centred around pickpocketing and extortion by *maibobo*,

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19 Usalama Project III mental mapping exercise with IDPs, Goma, 11 April 2019.

harassment by gangs and intimidation by security forces.²⁰ These types of insecurity have become a systematic part of everyday life in Goma. Banditry and petty crime have become a livelihood for many and are part of an urban economy of survival and enrichment. Stolen goods are openly sold in the markets, many criminals are known in the neighbourhood and some gang leaders are well-known throughout the city.

Security after dark

At night, security dynamics deteriorate and insecurity takes more violent forms. Most residents return home, while gangs and (mixed) patrols of *Police nationale congolaise* (PNC, Congolese National Police) and *police militaire* (PM, military police) units move through the streets. With empty streets and the cover of darkness, it becomes easier for bandits, thieves, police and military officers with bad intentions to operate. As a shopkeeper in Ndoshho explains:

We do not walk the streets during the night. After 7 p.m., it is the police and the military that walk the streets. If you do not have your voter registration card, they take your money and phone. If you do have your card on you, they ask for cigarettes. If you can't give them something, your phone is gone. Especially when they are already drunk. ... Or they just beat you.²¹

A Congolese researcher and NGO staff member adds, 'What strikes me is how we leave them all this room during the night, since no one except bandits can be found on the streets. ... The

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²⁰ As a vibrant economic neighbourhood, Ndoshho, with places such as Station Simba, Terminus, Nyabushongo and Cajed, experiences higher levels of petty crime than Mugunga. Except for the commercial axis of Amour and the market of Kanyarushinya, Mugunga is a relatively calm neighbourhood during the day.

²¹ Interview with shopkeeper, Goma, 4 April 2016.

higher we build our walls, the more incapable we are to leave our house.’²² At night, even a *motard* (motorcycle taxi driver) can transform into a bandit. An inhabitant of Ndosho explains:

Since it was after dark, the *motard* refused to drop me off at home, which is inside the neighbourhood and left me at the school of Kigogo in Ndosho. When I offered him the CDF 3,000 (USD 1.80) we agreed upon, the driver refused, asking CDF 5,000 (USD 3) instead. We started to argue, and the driver started to fight and robbed me of everything I had on me— my laptop, telephone, hard disc, passport and work documents. While beating me, the driver shouted, ‘Thief! Thief! This guy is stealing my motorcycle.’ The neighbours started to appear, armed with sticks and chevrons, looking for a car tire to burn me.²³

The respondent managed to escape but when he went to the nearby police station to file a complaint, he was asked for USD 50 to open an investigation. Discouraged, he decided to drop it. He adds, ‘There, where I reside, they think I have money. But I have nothing. If I find some means, I will move out of this neighbourhood.’²⁴

Gang activities also intensify at night, with gangs robbing passers-by of their money, phones and other valuables. As one gang leader asserts, ‘It is on the streets at night where there is a lot of money. ... I do not lack a telephone. I am a businessman. They call me. There is someone who is coming. ... There is something in his backpack. I will know how to take that money.’²⁵ At times, he argues, they collaborate and do coops (from cooperate, meaning to do deals) with officers of the PNC or FARDC. He goes on to explain: ‘I tell him [the PNC or FARDC

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22 Usalama Project III interview with Congolese researcher, Goma, 26 March 2019.

23 Usalama Project III interview with resident, Goma, 15 April 2019.

24 Usalama Project III interview with resident, Goma, 15 April 2019.

25 Usalama Project III interview with gang leader, 5 April 2019.

officer] we are going to do that and that and that [a particular type of criminal activity]. He is then going to secure the place where we will operate. Afterwards everyone gets their share.’²⁶

Other gangs and groups of alleged PNC and FARDC units rob peoples’ homes at night. In March 2019, a gang of unarmed robbers entered a house in Ndosho. Using a car jack to open the door, they shouted: ‘Mon capitaine, beta makasi’ [Captain, shoot!] to give the impression that they were armed soldiers. Once inside, the thieves looted the place, making a human chain to pass valuables out of the house.²⁷

Robberies at night are cited as one of the main forms of night-time insecurity in Ndosho and Mugunga. This form of insecurity has become very common and people can be victims on multiple occasions. In contrast to the case above, where criminals only pretend to have weapons, in other cases, the criminals are armed. As one victim of an armed robbery describes:

The bandits entered in masses. They were very many. I was sleeping downstairs with my wife and the baby. They entered the front door by shooting through it. We fled our room to take the stairs to go inside. Downstairs, they forced one of our daughters to show them the rooms upstairs. We locked ourselves in the room. The bandits shot through the door, hurting our baby, right above her eye and in her arm. We fled to the shower. The baby was bleeding very much. They came in and I started to give them everything they wanted from us. That night, I had prepared for my travel to Benin the day after. My luggage was all packed. They took it all. It was very traumatizing. My wife, who was pregnant, gave birth too early but the baby is more or less ok. While locked in the bathroom, I called the *chef de quartier* and the colonel I know but they

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 26 Usalama Project III interview with gang leader, 5 April 2019.

27 Usalama Project III focus group with three woman and chef d’avenue, Goma, 27 March 2019.

started to talk about fuel, [more specifically, the lack of fuel, which prevented them from intervening] so no one came to help.²⁸

Targeted attacks

FARDC and PNC personnel can transform into criminals at night, too. A victim of a robbery explains how soldiers looted his house while he and his wife attended a wedding. Their son, who was home at the time, was tied to the bed. The next day, the son encountered a *maibobo* selling their stolen solar panel battery on the streets, suggesting collaboration between soldiers, *maibobo* and gangs.²⁹ These armed robberies are often said to be targeted cases, as the incidents above suggest. This means that victims are selected beforehand, often because of supposed money or valuables in their possession. During these robberies, bandits can easily kill people on the spot.

Another form of deadly incidents are *règlement de comptes* (French; score settling), where people are targeted to be murdered or kidnapped due to a variety of conflicts, such as land or economic conflicts, family disputes and political contestations. As a resident of Mugunga puts it: ‘There is no effect without a cause. To kill someone. There are roots somewhere.’³⁰ In other words, people get murdered for a reason. Not all victims are targeted, however. Many are collateral damage or, in the words of some interviewees, they are known as ‘*figurants*’.³¹ In these cases, bandits seek to sow confusion about who the real target is, erase their traces and get rid of possible witnesses.³²

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28 Usalama Project III interview with NGO staff member, Goma, 13 April 2019.

29 Usalama Project III interview with victim of robbery, Goma, 27 March 2019.

30 Usalama Project III interview with resident, Goma, 28 March 2019.

31 Usalama Project III focus group with *association des jeunes*, Goma, 1 April 2019.

32 Usalama Project III interview with resident, Ndosho, Goma, 3 April 2019; Interview with resident Mugunga, Goma, 6 April 2019.

The following story is illustrative in this regard. On 16 February 2019, a group of armed bandits in civilian clothes raided Mugunga, entering the neighbourhood from Virunga National Park. They went straight to the house of a pastor and community leader known as Tumaini, who was not home. They forced a neighbour to call him in order to locate him and once they found him, they immediately executed him.³³ During this operation, which lasted no more than an hour, the bandits killed six people (including an FARDC lieutenant) and two more on their way back towards the park, leaving a total of eight dead.³⁴ One of the *figurants* was killed next to a school complex in which hundreds of PNC officers of the *Groupe mobile d'intervention* (GMI, Mobile Group of Intervention) are stationed.³⁵

Trying to understand why the pastor was targeted, an interviewee stresses: 'There were no suspicions that Mr Tumaini collaborated with the FDLR or other culprits.' The pastor was a leader of a committee defending the rights of people that were under threat of being relocated from a plot of land in Mugunga, which was of interest to a cigarette company. 'After his death, they [land surveyors] came to the site of the subdivision for the land in those streets where he exercised his leadership. So, we can say that the death of the pastor is due to land conflict.'³⁶

In another case, on 29 February 2019, six armed bandits—some in civilian clothes; some in military uniforms—attacked the commercial hotspot in Mugunga, Amour, and killed a woman who owned a shop. She was in conflict over money with her family-in-law, who accused her of witchcraft and intoxicating her husband. Earlier, she had already faced three other attacks by armed bandits. Her husband, who was in the shop with

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 33 Usalama Project III interview with widow, Goma, 6 April 2019.

34 Usalama Project III interview with *chef de quartier* of Mugunga, Goma, 26 March 2019.

35 Usalama Project III interview with shopkeeper, Goma, 3 April 2019.

36 Usalama Project III interview with resident of Mugunga, Goma, 4 April 2019.

her that day, was also killed.³⁷ In this case as well, the bandits looted, killed and wounded people they encountered on their way. In total, six people were killed and around twenty others wounded.³⁸ Commenting on the case, a resident of Mugunga asserts: ‘Note that the *sous-CIAT* [lowest level police station] is located only a few metres from where the incident occurred, and FARDC soldiers are in the vicinity. But curiously, there was no intervention. Let’s not even talk about an investigation.’³⁹ Shortly afterwards, the only police officer present at the station explained that the station is limited to two police officers, which is clearly insufficient in terms of capacity to defend nearby inhabitants against attacks by groups of armed robbers.⁴⁰

Shifting security dynamics

Levels of violence, insecurity and crime in Goma fluctuate over time and within different parts of the city. Often an increase in urban insecurity occurs during periods of political unrest or fighting in the city’s hinterlands. A rise in violent armed robberies was noted during the CNDP war in 2008. After the deployment of special units of the PM in 2009—the organization of mixed patrols with MONUSCO—and the re-establishment of public street lightning, robberies declined.⁴¹

There was a similar peak during the M23 military campaign in 2012 when new forms of urban crime, including kidnappings, emerged. From 2015 onwards, kidnappings in Goma and the wider

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37 Usalama Project III interview with relative of victim, Goma, 3 April 2019.

38 Esther Nsapu, ‘RDC: Une Fusillade Fait 6 Morts à Goma’, *La Libre Afrique*, 13 September 2018. Accessed 25 June 2019, <https://afrique.lalibre.be/18584/rdc-une-fusillade-fait-6-morts-a-goma>.

39 Usalama Project III interview with resident, Goma, 3 April 2019.

40 Usalama Project III interview with PNC officer, Goma, 6 April 2019.

41 Timothée Butwali Mabingo, ‘Raisons de La Persistance Des Cas d’assassinats Dans La Ville de Goma de 2004 à 2008’, Goma: University of Goma 2008; Pole Institute, ‘Est de La RDC: Le Crime Banalisé’, Goma: Regards Croisés, 2009.

region steadily increased, with victims mainly being children who are seen as easy targets as well as bringing high ransom payments.⁴² Since the end of 2018, more violent forms of urban crime have been on the rise, caused by a complex interaction of local and regional political, economic and military dynamics. A fall in the exchange rate from CDF 900 to CDF 1,600 as equivalent to USD 1 over the past three years has led to an economic crisis at the household level, as well as drastically reducing the salaries of security personnel. In both cases, individuals are being pushed to ‘find a living in a different manner’.⁴³

The lead up to the 2018 national elections, held on December 30, 2018, including the release of prisoners by presidential pardon and the increased mobilization of security forces, was highlighted as a period of increased urban insecurity and crime.⁴⁴ The immediate post-election period was also characterized by confusion and a lack of clarity around local power structures.⁴⁵ It took five months for a new provincial governor to be elected and several military hierarchies had shifted, impacting on patronage networks. People refer to the current situation of ‘extreme political fragility’ as giving a ‘freeway’ to ‘those who want to attack’.⁴⁶

The dynamics of urban insecurity are also often closely

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 42 John Emerson, ‘DR Congo: Kidnappings Skyrocket in the East’, New York: Human Rights Watch, 16 December 2015. Accessed 26 June 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/16/dr-congo-kidnappings-skyrocket-east>; ‘A Goma, trop d’enfants disparaissent!’, *Habari DRC*, 19 Mai 2019. Accessed 26 June 2019, <https://habarirdc.net/a-goma-trop-denfants-disparaissent>. Mubalama, Passy. ‘Kidnapping à Goma: «Les Enfants, Une Nouvelle Cible Des Ravisseurs»’, Rift Valley Institute, 29 April 2019. Accessed 26 June 2019, <http://riftvalley.net/news/kidnapping-a-goma>

43 Usalama Project III interview with member of La Lucha, Goma, 12 April 2019; Usalama Project III interview with security manager of international NGO, Goma, 10 April 2019.

44 Usalama Project III focus group with *association des jeunes*, Goma, 1 April 2019; Usalama Project III interview with leader of civil society, Goma 22 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with leader of *Cellule pour le développement*, Goma, 29 March 2019.

45 Usalama Project III interview with Congolese researcher, Goma, 26 March 2019.

46 Usalama Project III interview with *chef de quartier*, Goma, 26 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with *chef de quartier adjoint*, Goma, 26 March 2019.

connected to particular kinds of spaces, such as roads, densely populated residential areas, markets, schools, petrol stations, banks and security headquarters. During a mapping exercise, where respondents were asked to identify places of insecurity (*zones rouge* or red zones) in their neighbourhood, they often identified places where people had been killed.

The Ndosho and Mugunga maps show a large number of these red zones. The northern border of the neighbourhoods with Virunga National Park were marked on all maps as one red line, which some referred to as *le bain du sang* (French; bloodbath). People use the spatial category of *points chauds* (French; hotspots) when talking about their experiences of urban insecurity. For example, the residences of some senior FARDC officers are identified as places to be avoided at night because of alleged extortion by their personal guards.⁴⁷ Commercial hotspots, such as Simba petrol station in Ndosho, are explicitly connected to gang activity.

In the Mugunga neighbourhood, a place called Kanyarutchinya is seen as the main red zone due to the concentration of gangs, FDLR scouts and security forces.⁴⁸ Spatial connections of insecurity are further illustrated by a youth from Mugunga:

In our neighbourhood there are several firearms hidden in houses... we have already witnessed more than five arrests of persons in possession of weapons collaborating with the resident bandits in the Nyiragongo [Nyiragongo territory or the park]. This confirms that they operate in networks. The sellers of firewood are satellites of the people who live in the park. You can often find them [the people from the

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47 Usalama Project III focus group discussion with IDPs, Goma, 11 April 2019.

48 Usalama Project III mental mapping exercise with IDPs, Goma, 11 April 2019; Usalama Project III mental mapping exercise with youth, Goma, 11 April 2019; Pole Institute, 'Problématique de la recrudescence de l'insécurité dans la commune de Karisimbi', Goma: Pole Institute, 2018.

park] at the market of Kanyarutchinya.⁴⁹

An important spatial representation of violence and insecurity are the *maisons de tolérance*. These consist of private houses in which prostitution is organized and alcohol and drugs can be consumed. They have the reputation as places where criminal deals are made and nodes in the circulation of arms. Interviewees identify them as yellow zones: places that are insecure but have no deadly violence.⁵⁰ During mapping exercises with community members, these zones are indicated as hotspots of daytime insecurity. During focus group discussions, mothers refer to the *maisons de tolérance* as a risk for their children, potentially drawing them into criminality.⁵¹ Youth mention how they are sometimes falsely accused of association with *maisons de tolérance*,⁵² indicating how urban crime sometimes affects the perception of youth.

Spaces of insecurity inside the neighbourhood can be connected to those outside the city through criminal networks. A mother in Ndosho describes the story of her son, who disappeared for two years:

When he was sixteen years old, he started to pass his time in some of the *maisons de tolérance*. One day, he disappeared only to return two years later. He explained how in one of these houses, he had been recruited by a retired colonel, who took him outside of the city into the Nyiragongo territory, to a large compound. Several young boys were kept imprisoned there, being fed and trained and forced to go and steal during daytime in Goma. They had to pay a daily fee to the colonel and failing to do so resulted in threats of their family members being hurt. When my son escaped and returned home, I had nowhere to go, I was too

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49 Usalama Project III focus group with youth, Goma, 1 April 2019.

50 Usalama Project III mental mapping exercise with female traders, Goma, 9 April 2019.

51 Usalama Project III focus group with female traders, Goma, 9 April 2019.

52 Usalama Project III focus group with school children, Goma, 9 April 2019.

scared of repercussions to go and report to the police.⁵³

Another dimension of insecurity is the proximity of Virunga National Park—the operational ground of several armed actors⁵⁴—which is seen by Goma’s residents as a threat to its outer neighbourhoods. On 9 April 2019, three stone vendors were kidnapped from the Kanyarutchinya market, and the places where some of their clothes were found indicated that they were taken outside of the city and into the park.⁵⁵ One member of the Mugunga youth association explains that this kind of kidnapping often occurs: ‘The FDLR just takes people with them to help transport goods for them to the park. After a couple of days, they are often released without a ransom being asked.’⁵⁶

Some places also physically represent the connection between the park and the city, such as a hill referred to as *colline de Kabila*, where the FARDC used to have a strategic base. Several cases of kidnappings have occurred in the direct vicinity of the hill, which criminals and kidnapers from the park must pass by.⁵⁷ People refer to the hill as a *champs de bataille* (French; battlefield) and the most dangerous place in the Mugunga neighbourhood. It is often where victims are found.⁵⁸

Especially in periods of tension and violence, the park has become a symbol for what Goma’s residents call outside or foreign violence and violent actors. It has become linked to the presence of armed groups such as the FDLR, which in Goma is commonly referred to as a foreign—Rwandan—aggressor. Some

53 Usalama Project III focus group with female traders, Goma, 9 April 2019.

54 Esther Marijnen and Judith Verweijen, ‘Pluralising Political Forests: Unpacking “the State” by Tracing Virunga’s Charcoal Chain’, *Antipode* (2018): 1–22, 8.

55 Usalama Project III interview with member of the *Association de jeunes*, Goma, 11 April 2019.

56 Usalama Project III interview with member of the *Association de jeunes*, Goma, 11 April 2019.

57 Usalama Project III interview with president of the *Association de jeunes*, Goma, 12

April 2019; Usalama Project III mental mapping exercise with IDPS, Goma, 11 April 2019.

58 Usalama Project III focus group with IDPs, Goma, 11 April 2019.

residents propose building a wall at the northern frontiers of the city to close it off from the park.

4. Who are the (In)security Actors in Goma?

Identifying the main actors involved in urban insecurity can be a difficult task. Residents accuse a multitude of actors of sowing insecurity in Goma, including *maibobo*, gangs, bandits, the security services, escaped prisoners, *infiltrés* (rebels or former rebels from armed groups) and *démob* (referring to demobilized soldiers). Often, the perpetrators of killings, kidnappings and armed robberies remain unidentified. Nevertheless, a number of general tendencies are evident in the city.⁵⁹ First, urban insecurity actors are a diverse group: state and non-state actors; civilians and military or security personnel. Second, and related, security actors can simultaneously be responsible for insecurity.

Blaming the FDLR

The FDLR is a Rwandan Hutu rebel group that has been operating in the eastern DRC for more than 15 years. It has become an integral part of the complex armed group constellation in North and South Kivu, playing an important role in different violent insurgencies.⁶⁰ Like other armed groups, the FDLR is not visibly present, but it is commonly accepted by Goma's inhabitants that they operate in an indirect way, through infiltration in political, economic and social networks. The FDLR are often accused of committing violent crimes in the city. The account below, for example, is a common view held by Goma residents regarding FDLR activities:

The rebels come and operate here. They finance many

59 Alexis Bouvy, 'Nous n'avons que nos yeux pour pleurer'; Büscher, 'Conflict, State Failure'.

60 Jason Stearns and Christoph Vogel, 'The Landscape of Armed Groups in the Eastern Congo', New York: Center on International Cooperation, 2015.

[economic] activities: buses, trucks, motorcycles, shops, wood planks, charcoal. Many of the shops at Amour [the main road running through Mugunga] work to the account of the FDLR, and pay the FDLR since they work with their money [traders have financial debts with the FDLR and pay them a form of tax in return]. Once you are dishonest, if you scorn them, or when you do not honour the agreement... They come after you and even your family. But when you follow their conventions, they are not bad. You make a living. You need to do things right when you work with them.⁶¹

The complex relations between armed groups and urban economic markets is well known to urban inhabitants.⁶² In cases of murders and kidnappings, explanations are often sought through victims' involvement in military-economic relations. For example, on 2 March 2019, five people were killed in Ndosho—a pharmacist and his client, a phone credit seller, a motorcycle taxi driver and a merchant. The pharmacist's neighbour was kidnapped and his wife paid a ransom of USD 2,500 in order to liberate him. It is assumed that he was kidnapped by the FDLR to settle a score because he was engaged in the mineral business in Walikale, a territory more than 200 km away from Goma, to the west. One interviewee indicates that he suspected him of collaborating with Cheka Mai Mai units, which are in conflict with the FDLR.⁶³

The narrative of the FDLR as perpetrator is also being reproduced in the political domain. For example, some of the provincial opposition deputies have openly expressed their suspicions of collaboration between specific army officers and armed groups

61 Usalama Project III interview with resident, Goma, 28 March 2019.

62 Scott, *Laurent Nkunda et La Rébellion Du Kivu*; Büscher, 'Urban Governance Beyond the State'.

63 Usalama Project III interview with resident, Goma, 3 April 2019.

in organizing urban insecurity.⁶⁴ The mayor of Goma, Timothée Mwisa, also accused ‘certain politicians’ of collaborating with armed groups to terrorize the urban population.⁶⁵ These accusations followed a press release in which a provincial deputy demanded that the mayor resign due to his inability to handle the worsening security situation.⁶⁶ Pointing at the FDLR as being responsible for insecurity in Goma thus offers the mayor a way to mask his own failures of urban governance and the provision of security and protection, and even, according to some, to hide his own complicity in the violence.⁶⁷

This interpretation resonates with similar findings on narratives about the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a rebel group active in the Congo and Uganda, established to further specific political objectives. For example, by framing ADF as a terrorist organization, the Uganda government to legitimize invading the DRC, to attract military support from the USA in the ‘global war on terror’ and to slander opposition politicians.⁶⁸

Narratives of FDLR implication in urban insecurity in Goma is strongly connected to the reputation of the city as an entry point of foreign aggressors. As mentioned earlier, violence is often ascribed to foreign actors, thereby denying the role of local

64 Sonia Rolley, ‘RDC: Des Députés Du Nord-Kivu s’inquiètent d’une Hausse de l’insécurité’, *RFI Afrique*, 3 March 2019. Accessed 26 June 2019, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190303-rdc-deputes-nord-kivu-s-inquietent-hausse-insecurite>.

65 Ivonne Kapinga, ‘Tueries à Goma: Le maire de la ville accuse “certains politiciens et des enfants de connivence avec les groupes armés’, *Actualité CD*, 6 March 2019. Accessed 26 June 2019, <https://actualite.cd/2019/03/06/tueries-goma-le-maire-de-la-ville-accuse-certains-politiciens-et-des-enfants-de>.

66 Gisèle Mbuyi, ‘Tuerie à Goma dans le Nord-Kivu : 6 personnes abattues et une enlevée par des présumées FDLR’, *Digital Congo*, 4 Mars 2019. Accessed 25 June 2019, <https://digitalcongo.net/article/5c7d191d90e7320004c53a88/>

67 Usalama Project III interview with member of La Lucha, Goma 12 April 2019; Usalama Project III interview with Congolese researcher, Goma, 26 March 2019; Usalama Project III interview with Congolese researcher, Goma, 13 April 2019.

68 Kristof Titeca and Daniel Fahey, ‘The Many Faces of a Rebel Group: The Allied Democratic Forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo’, *International Affairs* 92/5 (2016), 1189–1206.

actors and obscuring local dynamics. The crucial role of local actors, processes and dynamics cannot be ignored, however. The role of local actors in insecurity in Goma is demonstrated in the accounts of arrested offenders, who turn out to be locally based *Gomatraciens* (inhabitants of Goma). In fact, many respondents claim that the FDLR narrative is used by all kinds of local bandits as a pretext to make people believe they operate for the FDLR by using escape routes via the park. A PNC officer explains:

The FDLR is a pretext that we put forward. But in reality, it is a fact that most Congolese are unemployed, which is the problem. Bandits operate and vanish directly. The park is far! ... Because of unemployment, people need to fend for themselves in other ways. ... After bandits come and operate, people say, 'Ah, it is the FDLR. They spoke Kinyarwanda.' But most people here speak Kinyarwanda.⁶⁹

Another PNC officer adds: 'Pointing the finger at the FDLR? But no, there are also police officers who do that [killing, robbing, kidnapping]. Even soldiers [FARDC]. There is no follow up.'⁷⁰

The varied perceptions of FDLR involvement in urban insecurity demand a more nuanced analysis. What becomes clear upon closer inspection is that the FDLR narrative seems to be an oversimplification. In the cases of urban insecurity that are documented, local and external actors closely interact. Apart from the key role the FDLR play in the wood and charcoal trade, local conflicts are equally important to the dynamics of insecurity and violence in Goma. Moreover, the FDLR narrative has been politicized and serves several different agendas, with violence in Ndosho and Mugunga reinforcing suspicions about who is in collaboration with this armed group.⁷¹

69 Usalama Project III focus group with PNC officers, Goma, 15 April 2019.

70 Usalama Project III focus group with PNC officers, Goma, 15 April 2019.

71 Usalama Project III focus group with female traders, Goma, 9 April 2019.

Involvement of state authorities

There is a general consensus among Goma inhabitants that the state authorities are complicit in urban insecurity. Respondents claim that the state security services harass, extort and rob the inhabitants of the city, often in conjunction with *maibobo*, gangs and other culprits.⁷² The high levels of kidnappings, killings and robberies, combined with continued impunity, have led to a deterioration of the relationship between the residents of Goma and the state authorities.

For many residents in Goma, recent violent criminal incidents are seen as part of an overall plan that aims to use insecurity to push opportunist political agendas. This sentiment is reinforced whenever PNC, FARDC or *Agence Nationale de Renseignements* (ANR, National Intelligence Agency) units are caught involved in crime. For example, on 30 March 2019, a military intelligence officer was caught in Mugunga selling two firearms to FDLR rebels.⁷³ This story spread like wildfire, fuelling suspicions of the complicity of state security actors—and politicians—in the current increase in violence. A popular television comedy sketch reflects these popular suspicions: based on a true story of an armed robbery, the sketch shows a man being visited at his house by a group of armed bandits. When a family member watching from behind a cupboard calls the *numéro vert* (the emergency police number), the mobile phones of the armed thieves start to ring.⁷⁴ Such perceptions are further inflamed by the figure of *homme armé non autrement identifié* (French; unidentified armed man), who appears in the media and popular narratives as the main perpetrator of violence in the city. Despite not being identifiable, discussions often circulate around whether they were

72 Usalama Project III mental mapping exercise with youth, Goma, 9 April 2019;

Usalama Project III mental mapping exercise motorcycle taxi drivers, Goma, 11 April 2019.

73 Usalama Project III interview with *bourgmestre*, Goma, 4 April 2019.

74 Usalama Project III interview with president of local NGO, Goma, 13 April 2019.

seen wearing a PNC or FARDC uniform.

The passivity and inaction by the PNC, FARDC and ANR—perceived as doing nothing to stop rising levels of insecurity and violence—also strengthens perceptions of complicity. Contrary to these negative public perceptions, police units stress that their stations at the neighbourhood level, especially the lowest level PNC stations, the *sous-CIATS* or *sous-commissariats*, are under-resourced and understaffed, with only a handful of police officers. Both Ndosho and Mugunga have one *commissariat* (CIAT; police station) attached to the office of the *chef de quartier* and three *sous-commissariats* (*sous-CIAT*) spread over each neighbourhood. This lack of resources is verified by the research team, who observed that one of the three *sous-CIATs* in Mugunga had only two police officers on duty and a single firearm.⁷⁵

While the question of whether the security services are complicit in recent attacks remains open, there is certainly some truth in the shared complaints by people in Goma that bandits and gangs collaborate with and are protected by the state authorities. Denouncing a criminal, for example, can be a dangerous undertaking: after having been arrested, suspected perpetrators often find themselves back on the streets in short order, often aware of who denounced them. For a share of the profits derived from criminal activities or payment of a negotiated fine, thieves and other criminals are quickly released from police detention. A PNC officer asserts, ‘We police officers are transformed into judges because if we transfer cases to the *parquet* (prosecutor’s office), we do not eat.’⁷⁶

Sometimes, orders to release criminals or to hold back from prosecution come from above. A police officer explains, ‘Lots of bandits are known by the executives [*les cadres*]. They go to Munzenze [the central prison in Goma], only pretending. After

75 Usalama Project III observation, Goma, 6 April 2019.

76 Usalama Project III focus group with PNC officers, Goma, 15 April 2019.

two weeks, they are out.’⁷⁷ A commander from another police station elaborates:

One day I arrested someone with counterfeit money. Later, he even confessed that he kidnapped people. I wanted to transfer him to the *parquet* but I got into trouble with the superior prosecutor. A prosecutor came to my station and said, ‘Not all meat is edible.’ He wanted me to release him without conditions. So, what should I do? ... I released him. The prosecutor is the prosecutor. If I continued, he would pursue me. Besides, the criminal association remains operative here. So, I should be careful. Our Congo is in total failure.⁷⁸

Patronage and protection

To understand how patronage and protection networks function between state authorities and criminals, it is important to recognize that they depend on one another. Gangs need patrons for their protection and the state authorities often seek clients to provide them with money and inside information. Furthermore, on some occasions, such as the anti-Kabila protests in the run-up to the 2018 elections, PNC officials deployed gangs to help break up these protests.⁷⁹

From their perspective, as a police officer explains, ‘Bandits like to work with the authorities here. Even here in our [police] station. They come by . . . “Ah vieux [old man]!”⁸⁰ It is you that they sent here.” We are the youngsters of this neighbourhood. ...

77 Usalama Project III focus group with PNC officers, Goma, 15 April 2019.

78 Usalama Project III interview with PNC commander, Goma, 2 April 2019.

79 Interview with gang leader, Goma, 15 July 2017.

80 Literally, the French word ‘*vieux*’ translates to ‘old man’ but in this context it refers respectfully to an elder or superior.

They want to familiarize themselves with us.’⁸¹ A gang member elaborates:

If we go to virgin ground, first we visit the *chef* of that place. We try to meet the highest officer of the army or police. [We say], ‘Here, you have USD 100.’ On USD 1,000, this is nothing. Or: ‘Please give me your number and I will send you phone credits afterwards.’ The officer can’t refuse [laughing].⁸²

A gang leader summarizes this system of patronage and protection using a Lingala proverb: ‘*loboko oyo ekabaka, bakataka yango te* [the hand that nourishes, one does not cut]’.⁸³

Often, state security services also forge relationships with gang members. A gang leader, interviewed for this project, described the following experience:

At one point in time the gang leader was wanted by the security services. He decided to present himself to a high-ranking PNC officer to resolve the issue. The police on duty threw him in the police cell and lashed him. The next day, when they wanted to punish him again, doubling the number of lashes, the gang leader broke down and started crying. He begged the police not to hurt him, arguing that he did not know anything about what they wanted him to confess. He begged them instead to give him a fine, assuring the police officers that he had two goats at the house to offer them. After family members—who were part of the FARDC—came and pleaded for him, the police commander finally agreed to release him. He took the gang leader to his jeep and drove him home, where the gang leader showed the police commander his

81 Participant in Usalama Project III focus group with PNC officers, Goma, 15 April 2019.

82 Interview with gang member, Goma, 17 February 2017.

83 Interview with gang member, Goma, 15 May 2017.

goats. The commander refused the offer of the goats and instead gave the gang leader his phone number.

After he recovered from his injuries, the gang leader brought the police commander a bag of charcoal and a goat as a gift. According to the gang leader, the police commander told him that if he continued in this way, he would not have any problems. Since then, the gang leader periodically provides the police commander with information about Goma's criminal underworld. The gang leader said that after he called the police commander, some of the bandits he denounced are currently in Munzenze for the crimes they committed.

By first lashing the gang leader while in his custody, the police commander forged a relationship with him. Networks of criminals and state authorities are built on these kinds of mutually beneficial relationships, where one seeks protection, and the other information and financial rewards.⁸⁴

Following the appointment of a new mayor in February 2018, the replacement of high-ranking PNC and FARDC officials, and the change of governor twice in the post-election period, established patronage networks at different levels—within the municipal administration, military hierarchies and gang structures—have shifted and new structures appear to be in the making. The newly emerging patronage networks may create tensions between the various actors but they can also generate new operational spaces for insecurity actors.

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84 Usalama Project III interview with gang leader, Goma, 5 April 2019.

5. Responses to Insecurity in Goma

The inhabitants of Goma are generally frustrated with the state response to urban insecurity, violence and crime. They often blame the state security services for being complicit in criminal activities. In response, Goma communities are developing their own approaches to address insecurity in their neighbourhoods, which include popular demonstrations, youth policing groups and sometimes popular justice, which can result in suspects being killed by mobs. Community responses can take the form of collective or individual action, through which citizens take responsibility into their own hands in a variety of ways. These actions are not, however, always constructive and can further reinforce the popular proliferation of urban violence, damaging relationships between residents.

In this long list of responses to insecurity in Goma, the main absentees are the international actors. Although the city hosts a large number of international humanitarian and development agencies, as well a huge UN blue helmet deployment, they are rarely involved in urban issues. Instead, they mainly focus on the security, humanitarian and development situation in Goma's rural hinterlands.⁸⁵ While MONUSCO performs motorized patrols with jeeps in the city, they do not have permission to intervene due to the rules and conditions under which they are deployed.

Police and other local authorities

Although Goma has a large deployment of police and military

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85 Karen Büscher and Koen Vlassenroot, 'Humanitarian Presence and Urban Development: New Opportunities and Contrasts in Goma, DRC', *Disasters* 34/s2 (2010): S256-73.

personnel compared to rural areas, police stations at the neighbourhood level are largely understaffed and underequipped.⁸⁶ An oft-cited complaint about police intervention is that it usually comes too late. A *chef de quartier* explains, ‘If we call the police for intervention, they respond that they do not have fuel. I wonder, if it is really up to me, the *chef de quartier*, to buy fuel for the police.’⁸⁷ As well as fuel, police often lack the necessary vehicles (motorbikes, cars, jeeps) to operate effectively. For example, the police station in Karisimbi commune has only one jeep to cover all eight of the neighbourhoods there.⁸⁸ The ineffectiveness that results from their lack of resources, combined with the alleged PNC complicity in urban crime, undermines the legitimacy of the police in the eyes of the local population.

The state has not been entirely passive to rising levels of urban violence seen in Goma. In August 2017, for example, after more than ten murders in two weeks, the provincial general of the police activated emergency phone lines, which replaced an existing emergency call service that was seen as being largely dysfunctional.⁸⁹ Several interviewees, however, suggest that this was merely a symbolic action, since it has not resulted in a more efficient police approach.⁹⁰ Generally, the state response at times of heightened levels of insecurity in Goma is to strengthen

86 Underlying dynamics of the malfunctioning of the Congolese police forces are described in detail elsewhere. See, for example: Maria Eriksson Baaz and Ola Olsson, ‘Feeding the Horse: Unofficial Economic Activities within the Police Force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo’, *African Security* 4/4 (2011): 223–241; and Michel Thill, ‘Police at Work in Bukavu: Negotiating Revenue-Generation in Urban Pirate Markets’, in *Negotiating Public Services in the Congo*, eds. Tom De Herdt and Kristof Titeca, p.120–141, London: Zed Books, 2019.

87 Usalama Project III interview with *chef de quartier*, Goma, 26 March 2019.

88 Usalama Project III interview with *bourgmestre*, Goma, 4 April 2019.

89 Patrick Maki, ‘Goma: La Police met deux numéros verts à la disposition de la population pour lutter contre l’insécurité’, *Actualité CD*, 21 August 2017. Accessed 26 June 2019, <https://actualite.cd/2017/08/21/goma-la-police-met-deux-numeros-verts-la-disposition-de-la-population-pour-lutter-contre>.

90 Usalama Project III interview with member of the *Association des jeunes*, Goma, 14 April 2019; Usalama Project III Interview with NGO staff member, Goma, 13 April 2019.

security measures. Between February and April 2019, the result of this strategy was an increase of FARDC and PNC units deployed in the neighbourhoods of Ndosho and Mugunga, as well as an intensification of the mixed PNC and PM patrols.⁹¹ As these patrols tend to stay on the main roads, however, people doubt their effectiveness.⁹² Moreover, they also often harass residents, extorting them of money and phones.

Mugunga is an exception to the lack of police personnel: it is host to the more than 400 police officers of the GMI in a police training complex. Compared to other PNC units, the GMI are well-trained and equipped. Originally deployed in Goma during the election period (November – December 2018), they gradually started to take over some tasks of other PNC units, such as reinforcing patrols and making arrests. Their presence has made Mugunga one of the most militarized neighbourhoods in Goma. Despite this, the PNC has not succeeded in getting the insecurity situation under control. Police stations at the neighbourhood level closest to the population remain largely underequipped and understaffed, which provides operational space for criminals. More police deployment does not necessarily equate to more security, however. Respondents often say that at night it is better to avoid the main roads, which are patrolled by the PNC and PM.⁹³

The high intensity of violence and the large number of casualties in the early part of 2019 triggered extensive popular protest, putting pressure on the state authorities to react. The mayor of Goma has been the target of much blame for his inaction. In

91 For example, a small FARDC post with three small tents was erected on the hill called Oping in Ndosho and another on a hill north of Ndosho in the territory of Nyiragongo.

92 Usalama Project III interview with leader *Association des jeunes*, Goma, 12 April 2019; Usalama Project III interviews with *chef de quartiers*, Goma, 26 March 2019.

93 Usalama Project III mental mapping exercise with residents Ndosho, Goma, 9 April 2019; Usalama Project III mental mapping exercise with residents Mugunga, Goma, 11 April 2019.

response, on 6 March 2019, he organized a meeting with *cadres de base*—the lowest municipal administrative level consisting of the *chef de quartier* (district chief), *chefs de cellules* (‘block’ chiefs), *chefs d’avenues* (avenue chiefs) and *nyumba kumi* (chief of ten houses)—and visited Mugunga. The manner in which he addressed Mugunga residents—lacking insights into neighbourhood realities—did not impress them.⁹⁴ He made only vague promises of better instruction for the *cadres de base* and increased police deployment. The lack of confidence that local people have in the mayor has led to multiple requests, including from civil society and provincial MPs, to replace him.⁹⁵

One popular measure taken by the municipal authorities in Goma is to control the movement of people so as to identify potential intruders in the neighbourhood. On 12 March 2019, the *bourgmestre* of the commune of Goma published a statement calling for the *cadres de base* to participate in the comprehensive control of movement through the (re)implementation of the system of *jetons*. These are tokens people receive after having registered with their *chef de quartier*, which must be carried similar to an identity card. This system was previously instituted in 2008 but was later abandoned because it also facilitated more police harassment after dark; that is, police often request to see the *jeton* as a pretext for extortion.⁹⁶

94 Usalama Project III informal conversations with several residents and youth leaders, Goma, 6 April 2019. The mayor states that urban insecurity is due both to inhabitants killing one another in score settling and to the role of foreign infiltrators; see: Richard Mashuari Kalirwa, ‘Le Maire Muisa Nseke promet des solutions a l’insécurité dans son entité’, *MediaCongo*, 7 March 2019. Accessed 26 June 2019, https://www.mediacongo.net/article-actualite-48584_goma_le_maire_muisa_nkese_promet_des_solutions_a_l_insecurite_dans_son_entite.html; Kapinga, ‘Tueries à Goma’.

95 Usalama Project III interview with member of La Lucha, Goma, 12 April 2019.

96 Usalama Project III mental mapping exercise with IDPs, Goma, 9 April 2019.

Civil society

Responses to increasing levels of urban insecurity are also being organized by actors and associations framing themselves as part of urban civil society. In Congo, *La Société Civile* (French; civil society) is an institutionalized entity, with a clear hierarchical structure from the national to the neighbourhood level. Outside this, there are other forms of civic engagement, such as the more recent urban phenomenon of citizen movements which claim to distance themselves from institutionalized civil society organizations.

The security-related activities by institutionalized civil society associations mainly consist of three types of undertaking: documentation of cases, denouncing the government for malpractice and advocating for reform. Institutionalized civil society associations do this by making declarations in the media, helping to mobilize people for strikes and public demonstrations, and producing recommendations and memoranda to government and other political officials. For example, in March 2019, after two months of murderous raids and kidnappings in Goma, the Civil Society of North Kivu published a memorandum for better urban governance and management of the city, including of the police and the justice system. As a first step, they pleaded for the replacement of the current mayor, the provincial commissioner of the PNC and the superior military prosecutor in Goma.⁹⁷

In addition to the actions of institutionalized civil society organizations, other associations and movements engage in similar activities. Officially embedded in the state framework but in practice often situated in between the state and civil society, is the *Association des jeunes* (youth association), a nationwide organization with local branches at each governance level. The *Association des jeunes* in Goma interact with the local administration and also

97 Civil Society North Kivu, 'Mémorandum portant demande de sécurité en Ville de Goma et ses environs', Goma: Civil Society North Kivu, March 2019.

have a wide range of connections to church leaders, leaders of social movements, NGOs and other actors across the broader civil society. For Ndosho and Mugunga, the youth presidents and committee appear to be dynamic actors in terms of information gathering, denouncing and advocacy. They record cases of insecurity in their neighbourhoods by mobilizing their members to keep track of incidents. Moreover, in kidnapping cases, the president of the Goma youth association instructs members to gather information so they try to trace the routes of the kidnapers themselves, should the police remain inactive.⁹⁸

Following the kidnapping of three young men in Mugunga in March and April 2019, the president of the Goma youth association spent considerable time and effort, including the use of his own network, trying to document the events and speaking with the families of the victims. Based on such documentation, they also formulate recommendations and advocate for the security of the inhabitants of their neighbourhoods.⁹⁹ The *Associations des jeunes* generally have high levels of legitimacy among the inhabitants of Goma. As their structure is more horizontal and gender-balanced, they create a sense of shared engagement on the challenges of everyday urban insecurity. Moreover, they are rarely perceived as being corrupt or complicit in insecurity.

Public demonstrations

A powerful response to urban insecurity reflecting the deep frustration and anger of the population in the face of inaction and suspected complicity on the part of the police and the army is the organization of public demonstrations. Between January and April 2019, almost all instances of violent kidnappings and

98 Usalama Project III interview with vice president of *Association des jeunes*, Goma, 14 April 2019; Usalama Project III interview with president of *Association des jeunes*, Goma, 12 April 2019; Usalama Project III mental mapping exercise with IDPs, Goma, 11 April 2019.

99 Nsapu, 'RDC Tueries répétitives'.

killings were followed by marches, with different layers of the population participating to demand security and justice, and to end the ongoing violence through the intervention of the urban and provincial authorities. Rather than being organized by one particular community organization or social movement, these protest actions often emerge from spontaneous outcries of frustration and anger, and are subsequently seized upon by institutionalized civil society organizations, which then afterwards claim their active role in the demonstrations.¹⁰⁰

Citizen movements, such as the well-known *La Lucha* and *Filimbi*, also react to urban insecurity. These movements are comprised of mostly well-educated youth advocating for political reform, human rights and basic services, including security. Their actions have received considerable global media attention.¹⁰¹ Their relationship with the Congolese state is one of confrontation, often facing brutal state force during their demonstrations.¹⁰² Despite this attention and visibility, their legitimacy among urban inhabitants is limited, since they largely represent

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 100 Usalama Project III focus group with citizen movements, *Déboutists* and *Filimbi*, Goma, 8 April 2019; Usalama Project III interview with president of *Association des jeunes*, Goma, 3 April 2019; Usalama Project III focus group with *Association des jeunes*, Goma, 1 April 2019; Usalama Project III interview with member of *La Lucha*, Goma, 12 April 2019.

101 See for example: Kristen Chick, 'These young people are fighting for the Democratic Republic of Congo to live up to its name', *Los Angeles Times*, 5 October 2018. Accessed 26 June 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-congo-democracy-20181004-story.html>; Tom Wilson, 'Congolese activists on hunger strike after court refuses release', *The Guardian*, 19 March 2016. Accessed 26 June 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/19/congolese-activists-on-hunger-strike-after-court-refuses-release>.

102 Human Rights Watch, 'DR Congo, Youth Activists Rounded up at Strike', *Human Rights Watch*, 23 February 2016. Accessed 26 June 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/23/dr-congo-youth-activists-rounded-strike>; Ismail Akwei, 'DRC's Lucha activists protest against filth in Kinshasa; dozens arrested', *Africanews*, 27 April 2017. Accessed 09 July 2019, <https://www.africanews.com/2017/04/27/drc-s-lucha-activists-protest-against-filth-in-kinshasa-dozens-arrested/>.

a specific highly educated class.¹⁰³ At the neighbourhood level, Ndosho has its own citizen movement called *les Deboutistes*. Examples of actions they have taken are planting of trees in the neighbourhood and organizing a march, with participants carrying empty water cans to demand better access to water in the neighbourhood.¹⁰⁴

These different actors sometimes join forces to organize more regular actions or interventions. For example, in February 2019, *La Lucha* and the *Association des jeunes* wrote a letter and organized a petition demanding the dismissal of both the mayor of Goma and the provincial general of the police. In the same month, the same collective organized a similar petition calling for the dismissal of provincial deputies. In part due to their efforts, a motion was passed in the national assembly and a group of provincial ministers went to Kinshasa to advocate for security interventions in Goma. A delegation was sent from Kinshasa to Goma on 2 April for a fieldwork mission during which research was done on the recent insecurity. After the delegation returned to Kinshasa, however, no significant action followed.¹⁰⁵

Community action and youth policing groups

Faced with urban crime, people in Goma have started to act collectively, based on a shared sense of abandonment by the government. These forms of collective action are not formally organized but rather consist of local initiatives, which can nevertheless be effective. These community initiatives are generally characterized by a diversity typical to most urban environments.

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 103 International Crisis Group, 'Boulevard of Broken Dreams: The "street" and politics in the DRC', 13 June 2016. Accessed 26 June 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/democratic-republic-congo/boulevard-broken-dreams-street-and-politics-dr-congo>.

104 Usalama Project III focus group with *Déboutistes*, Goma, 8 April 2019.

105 Usalama Project III interview with member of *La Lucha*, Goma, 12 April 2019.

They include members of different ethnic communities who live together in their respective urban neighbourhoods and compared to the rural hinterlands are less mobilized around ethnic community identity.

At the neighbourhood level, alert systems are put in place by local residents to warn neighbours in case of danger. These systems mostly operate at night. For example, when bandits try to break into a house, people alert one another by screaming for help and making loud noises with whistles, tambourines and sirens. When such an event happens close to the incident taking place, however, this can be risky.¹⁰⁶ One respondent narrates how during one night-time armed robbery, the bandits shouted: ‘Those who do not bleed can open their mouths and shout. But if you know you bleed, you better shut up. Those who leave their house or scream will be shot immediately.’¹⁰⁷ In these cases, another means of informing local residents of danger is to send an SMS to neighbours living at a further distance from the crime taking place, who can then start to make noise. Although limited in scope, alert systems serve as bottom-up first-line security measures to protect residents from criminality.

Another community response to insecurity is youth policing groups and self-defence systems. Over the years, urban youth have been engaged in addressing crime and insecurity by patrolling the streets at night, retrieving stolen goods, looking for wanted criminals, as well as guarding the neighbourhood, markets and other public spaces. These groups are generally motivated by the powerful idea of *auto-prise en charge* (French; taking care of oneself). This idea originates from the economic and political crisis in the 1980s under President Mobutu, whereby people were called upon to organize themselves around the provision of public goods and services, such as security, because the state

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 106 Usalama Project III interview with four women, Goma, 27 March 2019.

107 Usalama Project III interview with *chef d’avenue*, Goma, 26 March 2019.

was unable to do so.¹⁰⁸

A popular form of such initiatives are the *auto-defence* (Fench; self-defence) groups organized by neighbourhood youth who patrol and set up barriers at night to exercise security controls. Generally unarmed, they work on a voluntary basis yet often ask for voluntary financial contributions for their services from the people under their protection.¹⁰⁹ At present, however, in light of the extreme violence used in robberies and kidnappings, these self-defence groups no longer enjoy the same support they used to from the municipal authorities and are largely being discouraged because of the risks associated with patrols for the participating youth.¹¹⁰ As a *cadre de base* states, ‘We cannot sacrifice the population like that.’¹¹¹ The *chef de quartier adjoint* (deputy to the *chef de quartier*) of Ndosho, who once participated in the mixed patrols as a civilian, explains, ‘Today, young people stay at home. They have whistles and tambourines to make noise at night but if they march during the night, they can encounter soldiers and police officers. They can kill them [youths].’¹¹²

Nonetheless, for the neighbourhoods of Ndosho and Mugunga, these initiatives have not completely vanished. In Mugunga, a key youth leader created an ad hoc self-defence system, only operational when needed. After the killings and kidnappings in Mugunga in February and March 2019, these youths undertook their own investigations. In collaboration with the head of the neighbouring administrative authority, in Rusayu, they succeeded in arresting two suspects and confiscated one machine

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 108 Judith Verweijen, ‘Between “Justice” and “Injustice”: Justice Populaire in the Eastern DR Congo’, JSRP Policy Brief 4, London: The Justice and Security Research Programme, August 2016; Judith Verweijen, ‘From Autochthony to Violence? Discursive and Coercive Social Practices of the Mai-Mai in Fizi, Eastern DR Congo’, *African Studies Review* 58/2 (2015): 157–180, 162.

109 Büscher, ‘Conflict, State Failure’.

110 Usalama Project III interview with *bourgmestre*, Goma, 4 April 2019.

111 Usalama Project III interview with *chef de quartier*, Goma, 26 March 2019.

112 Usalama Project III interview with *chef de quartier adjoint*, Goma, 26 March 2019.

gun on the outskirts of the territory of Nyiragongo, bordering Mugunga. The following day, they found several kilogrammes of ammunition and another machine gun hidden in a shop in the neighbourhood, which they handed over to the police.¹¹³

The Association for the Development of Nyabushongo (ADN), operating in Ndosho, is another example of an active youth self-defence initiative. In addition to their objective of promoting neighbourhood development, the ADN also aim to protect people and their goods. In small groups, ADN youth divide themselves among four sections of the neighbourhood after dark. Through walkie-talkies and whistles, they communicate and alert each other in case of trouble. They collaborate well with the PNC, often handing over alleged thieves to the nearby police station in Nyabushongo. The ADN also dispenses its own justice, however; for example, by beating up thieves.¹¹⁴ Residents generally have a positive perception of the ADN and their work.¹¹⁵ According to their coordinator, one reason for this is that ADN members work on a voluntary basis: ‘You can motivate us [give some money] if you are happy with our service.’¹¹⁶ In contrast, as another ADN member explains, ‘The anti-gang pass from shop to shop to ask for CDF 200 [USD 0.12]. We [ADN] don’t.’¹¹⁷

Anti-gangs are another popular urban policing actor that have been active in Goma for more than ten years. Being gangs¹¹⁸ and *sportifs* (trained in the martial arts), and armed with *nunchakus*

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113 Usalama Project III interview with leader of the *Association des jeunes*, Goma, 4 April 2019.

114 Usalama Project III interview with coordinator and *chef de sécurité* of ADN, Goma, 10 April 2019.

115 Usalama Project III mental mapping exercise with youth, Goma, 9 April 2019.

116 Usalama Project III focus group with ADN and the *Association des jeunes*, Goma, 10 April 2019.

117 Usalama Project III interview with coordinator and *chef de sécurité* of ADN, Goma, 10 April 2019.

118 In Goma, the word ‘gang’ denotes a person that is tough and has gang-like qualities rather than a group of people involved in illicit behaviour. Nevertheless, many of them are involved in criminal activities.

(Japanese; martial arts weapon), they claim to protect people against the everyday crime and violence of the *maibobo* and thieves. They were founded in 2007 to protect the market of Virunga and because of their success, gradually started operating throughout the city. In the Ndosho neighbourhood, a group of around 10 to 20 anti-gang people have been especially active around the commercial hotspot of Station Simba and the traffic point of Terminus. During the day, people can call on them when their belongings are stolen, such as mobile phones, or when they are threatened by *maibobo* or gangs. For a small fee, the anti-gang group will try to retrieve the phone or deter the *maibobo* or gang from causing trouble.¹¹⁹

In return for their protection, anti-gang members ask for a weekly voluntary contribution of CDF 200 (USD 0.12) per shop and vendor in their area of operation. Since their inception, their activities have been in flux, directly linked to whether they have had the support of the mayor or police officials. During times of support, they frequently carried out jobs for them; for example, to look for wanted persons, evict pirate markets or provide muscle at public demonstrations. At the same time, they often get into conflict with some of these actors, after which they can end up in prison or are forced into hiding. In general, the people of Ndosho tend to have negative perceptions of the anti-gangs. In large part, this is due to the fact that their weekly voluntary contributions are becoming less and less voluntary. Moreover, the anti-gangs have been blamed for complicity in much of the crime occurring in the neighbourhood. A local shop keeper sums up the situation:

The anti-gang... Ah, they are also gangs. They smoke weed. They [gangs and anti-gangs] know each other. They pretend to fight the *maibobo*, and afterwards they ask for

119 Maarten Hendriks, 'The Politics of Everyday Policing in Goma: The Case of the Anti-Gang', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 1/2 (2018): 274–289.

money. I give them CDF 200 [USD 0.12] every week. If you don't pay, they can take your goods. They say the money is for their *maître* [French; master]. They are *karateka* [person who practices karate]. I never asked them their documents but they work for city hall.¹²⁰

This demonstrates how the position and legitimacy of anti-gang groups in urban society in Goma is shifting and unstable. After multiple complaints and denunciations from people living and working in Ndosho, and the collapse of their patronage network—a new mayor was installed and a high-ranking police commander who was affiliated with the group was relocated—it has become more difficult for anti-gangs to operate. After the 2019 elections, at the initiative of the *Déboutists*, they were violently chased from the neighbourhood. One of them was also seriously beaten. Since then, there has been little anti-gang activity in Ndosho.¹²¹

Popular justice

A final important collective response to mounting insecurity is popular justice. In Goma, this generally refers to a type of mob justice, where alleged thieves who are apprehended are either stoned to death or burned alive by a crowd of people. This form of popular justice has been on the rise in recent years.¹²² The following example illustrates how an incident of popular justice can take place. After an armed robbery of a young couple in Ndosho, one of the bandits was overpowered by the husband. Responding to the neighbourhood alert system, people began to arrive and interrogated the culprit about his

120 Informal conversation with shop owner, Goma, 12 November 2015.

121 Usalama Project III focus group with *Déboutists*, Goma, 8 April 2019; Usalama Project III focus group with Anti-gang, Goma 5 April 2019.

122 Mairie de Goma, 2016; Marie de Goma, 2017.

accomplices, who had already fled. He remained silent and was taken to a nearby intersection, where a crowd of people from different parts of the neighbourhood then stoned him. Hours later the police arrived and took him to the hospital, where he eventually died. No police investigations were conducted. As the *chef de quartier adjoint* of Ndosho pointedly asks, ‘Who are we going to arrest?’¹²³ A crucial characteristic of this type of popular justice is that it is difficult to identify individual perpetrators. As one community member explains:

People come from far away to look and participate. Men, women, children, everyone. But the people from right here, no. The neighbours and victims [of the robbery] just observe. ... Even the *chef* can’t show himself. Otherwise he is complicit [in the act of popular justice].¹²⁴

To prevent persecution and out of fear for reprisals by the accomplices and loved ones of the thief being killed, interviewees argued that those directly affected do not participate in the act of killing. For that same reason, the young couple that was targeted by the bandits in the above case moved to another location to hide themselves for a while, even their neighbours did not know where.¹²⁵

Popular justice does not only target thieves. It also can be directed at those seen to cause harm to the community but who escape punishment. Popular justice therefore can be understood as an attempt to re-establish norms of justice in a state of violence and impunity.¹²⁶ In May 2019, the office of the *chef de quartier* and the attached police station of Kyeshero were being

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123 Usalama Project III interview with chef de quartier adjoint, Goma, 26 March 2019.

124 Usalama Project III focus group with three women and chef d’avenue, Goma, 27 March 2019.

125 Usalama Project III focus group with three women and chef d’avenue, Goma, 27 March 2019.

126 Verweijen, ‘Between “Justice” and “Injustice”’, 2016.

rebuilt after they had been burned to the ground by an angry mob. This followed an event in March 2019, when people caught a thief at Station Simba, located at a busy traffic point in Ndosho. Fearing for his life, the thief tried to reach the police station of Kyeshero, south of Ndosho. A PNC officer based at the station saw the crowd approaching and fired his gun to disperse the crowd, accidentally killing a young woman selling sugar cane at the side of the road. In response, the crowd turned its anger on the police station and the adjacent office of the *chef de quartier*, setting them both on fire.

Community responses can take the form of collective civil attitudes and engagements by which citizens take responsibility into their own hands. But these actions are not always beneficial for social cohesion and can further reinforce the popular proliferation of urban violence.

Individual responses

Goma residents have tried to adapt to changing security situations by taking a range of individual measures to protect themselves and their families. These measures strongly depend on the socio-economic status and the networks of those who take individual action. One radical response to insecurity is simply to move. During periods of heightened insecurity, those who have money, connections and the right papers often cross the border to Rwanda, returning to Goma once the situation has stabilized. Similarly, after experiencing a robbery at home, those able to do so can move to a safer part of the city.¹²⁷ Others opt to hire a police officer for personal protection. The advantage of hiring a private police officer, rather than a private security company, is

127 Usalama Project III interview with *bourgmestre*, Goma, 4 April 2019; Usalama Project III mental mapping exercise with residents Ndosho, Goma, 9 April 2019.

that they are armed.¹²⁸

As many robberies are targeted, people generally avoid walking around the neighbourhood with money. A businesswoman from Mugunga explains:

I was attacked by armed men in my shop the day I received USD 800 as my share of *likelemba* [a local saving system]. Army soldiers came and asked me for exactly the same amount of money that I just received! They started shooting and entered here. Also at my neighbours. They took everything and attacked my son, who was sixteen years old. We spent six months in the hospital with him.¹²⁹

Some local saving groups have adapted their payment systems by rotating the role of the treasurer. While previously they would work with a fixed calendar for payments, now the payment timetable is no longer communicated to the members and the treasurer contacts members individually. This shows how violence puts pressure on urban collective resilience mechanisms and forces people to adapt to the current context of insecurity.

Despite the risk of carrying money, there is also risk in having no money—should you be the target of a robbery. For example, a Ndosho resident explains how in January 2018, around ten men in FARDC uniforms entered his house, shooting. He and his wife tried to hide in the bedroom but the soldiers broke in. When he told them he did not have any money, they shot again. His wife intervened, giving the soldiers USD 360 that she had received from their daughter.

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128 Private security companies have become a booming business in Goma since 2007, partly due to the growing presence of banks and international humanitarian and development organizations. See: Karen Büscher and Koen Vlassenroot, 'Humanitarian Presence and Urban Development: New Opportunities and Contrasts in Goma, DRC', *Disasters* 34/2 (2010): 256–273.

129 Usalama Project III interview with businesswomen, Goma, 25 March 2019.

‘Luckily’, he said. ‘Otherwise they could have killed me.’¹³⁰

The situation in Goma has deteriorated so much that children are kept inside during times of high insecurity and everyone rushes home after dark—even going out of the main house to the toilet is a risk.¹³¹ Many mothers, fearful of their children being kidnapped, try to sensitize and educate them, advising them to exercise caution.¹³² Widely used security mechanisms, including double locks and dogs, are no longer seen as being very effective.

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 130 Usalama Project III interview with resident, Goma, 27 March 2019.

131 Usalama Project III focus group with female traders, Goma, 9 April 2019.

132 Usalama Project III focus group with female traders, Goma, 9 April 2019; Usalama Project III interview with mother of three boys, Goma, 10 April 2019.

6. Conclusions and Policy Considerations

Urban insecurity has become part of daily life in Goma and city residents have become accustomed to the general passivity of the security forces and state authorities in responding to it. To address urban insecurity in Goma, policymakers should take the time to listen to and better understand the experiences of city residents and their proposals about how to tackle the situation. Five considerations follow for those who seek to positively influence urban insecurity.

Put urban on the security agenda

Urban security and protection is not generally seen as a priority in eastern Congo. Both the international community and the provincial authorities overlook cities and urban dynamics in their agendas for conflict resolution and mediation, peacebuilding, disarmament and protection. Investing in security in Goma will require not only a shift or broadening of agendas, but will also entail adapting existing knowledge and approaches. Urban governance structures are organized differently from those at the rural level, characterized by a multitude of overlapping services and actors. Several dimensions of urban insecurity in Goma are similar to dynamics in other Congolese cities that are not in conflict zones, suggesting the need to move beyond a conflict framework. A commitment to address urban insecurity should also translate to an extensive investment in urban infrastructure, such as public lighting.

Increase deployment of properly trained security personnel

A large number of PNC and FARDC units are deployed in

Goma. As the headquarters of the provincial government, the state security services are more prevalent in the city than in the rural hinterlands. At the same time, police stations at the neighbourhood level are inadequately staffed and equipped. At night, far away from the main roads where mixed patrols of the PNC and PM units operate, thieves, bandits and kidnappers move about freely. To tackle this issue, PNC stations and FARDC positions in the peripheral neighbourhoods of Goma should be reinforced and police given adequate training and resources to carry out their jobs effectively. However, the deployment of more police and military does not always mean better security. In fact, residents frequently complain about harassment by PNC and FARDC units. Therefore, training and financial resources are as important as sheer numbers of security personnel. To this end, donors should commit to the ongoing comprehensive police reform in the Congo to support proper training and deployment.

End impunity by addressing complicity

Impunity is repeatedly cited as one of the key underlying drivers of urban insecurity in Goma. This is the result of the logic of complicity and mutual dependence between the state security forces and criminals. This dependency needs to be disentangled for impunity to be addressed. To do this, it is not enough to invest in the juridical aspects of prosecution, detention and the rule of law. It is also important to understand the key interests at stake in patronage networks. Only with this knowledge will it be possible to start to dismantle a system that rewards violence and harassment at all levels.

Address the urban dimension of armed group activities

To understand processes of insecurity in Goma, the position of the city needs to be understood in its broader economic, political

and military dynamics. To make sense of urban violence, crime and insecurity, connections between armed groups and urban elites or economic actors need to be further investigated. Cities may present more complex operational grounds for armed groups, working through a complex network of actors and spaces, yet the intimate connections between urban markets and armed actors need to be taken into account when addressing urban violence and dismantling criminal networks. Attention to these issues should not render invisible other local dynamics. Competition over highly valuable urban land or business-related power struggles may be at the source of some violent forms of urban insecurity. Narratives that put armed groups at the centre of the problem must be approached cautiously, in recognition of their potential role to be powerful mechanisms for political mobilizing.

Include youth in programmes to address urban insecurity

Youth play an active role in community attempts to address insecurity. They are capable and skilled enough to occupy parts of the political space that can put pressure on government to address security-related issues. Including youth in urban security governance should be done with a degree of caution and outcomes assessed critically. At the same time, there are examples of good practice, notably the *Associations des jeunes* at the neighbourhood level, which benefits from high levels of legitimacy among the urban population. These forms of proximity between urban residents and security providers are key to limit the space for criminals in the neighbourhood. By supporting structures such as this, their connections to the Goma administration and the security forces could be further strengthened and institutionalized.

Glossary of acronyms, words and phrases

ADN	Association for the Development of Nyabushongo
AFDL	<i>Alliance des Forces Démocratique pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre</i> (Democratic Allied Forces for the Liberations of Congo-Zaire)
ANR	<i>L'Agence National de Renseignement</i> (National Intelligence Agency)
<i>Association des jeunes</i>	youth association linked to the Congolese administration
<i>auto-prise en charge</i>	(<i>French</i>) taking care of oneself; a popular phrase used in various contexts but mostly refers to taking matters of security and justice into one's own hands
Banyarwanda	(<i>Swahili</i>) those coming from Rwanda
<i>bourgmestre</i>	(<i>French</i>) deputy-mayor, an officially elected urban administrative position heading the commune
<i>cadre de base</i>	(<i>French</i>) lowest level municipal administration position, consisting of the <i>chef de quartier</i> , <i>chefs de cellules</i> , <i>chefs d'avenues</i> and <i>nyumba kumi</i> (chief of ten houses)
<i>chef d'avenue</i>	(<i>French</i>) the head of one avenue
<i>chef de quartier</i>	(<i>French</i>) district chief; an official position in the urban administrative structure and officially appointed by the elected bourgmestre
<i>chef de quartier adjoint</i>	(<i>French</i>) deputy to the <i>chef de quartier</i>
CIAT	from the French word <i>commissariat</i> (police station)
CNDP	<i>Congrès national pour la défense du peuple</i> (National Congress for the Defence of the People)
<i>commune</i>	(<i>French</i>) the largest administrative entity of the city; Goma is divided into two communes: Karisimbi and Goma
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo

FARDC	<i>Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i> (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo)
FDLR	<i>Forces Démocratique de Libération du Rwanda</i> (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda)
<i>figurants</i>	(French) figurants
Filimbi	(Swahili) whistle. Urban-based citizen movement.
GMI	<i>Groupe Mobile d'Intervention</i> (Mobile Group of Intervention), a unit of the PNC
IDP	internally displaced person
<i>jeton</i>	(French) token
LUCHA	<i>Lutte pour le Changement</i> (Fight for change). Urban-based Citizen movement which originally started in Goma.
M23	<i>Mouvement du 23 Mars</i> (Movement of 23 March)
<i>maibobo</i>	(Swahili) street children
MONUSCO	<i>Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo</i> (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo)
Munzenze	the name of the central prison Goma
<i>parquet</i>	(French) prosecutor's office
PM	(French) <i>police militaire</i> (the military police), a unit of the FARDC
PNC	<i>Police Nationale Congolaise</i> (Congolese National Police)
<i>quartier</i>	(French) urban administrative entity below the commune level and above <i>cellule</i> and <i>avenue</i> levels
RCD	<i>Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie</i> (Congolese Rally for Democracy)
<i>sous-CIAT</i>	(French) <i>sous-commissariat</i> , the lowest level police station

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Ce rapport analyse la militarisation en territoire d'Uvira et la manière dont celle-ci façonne les rapports entre conflits locaux, gouvernance et mobilisation armée.



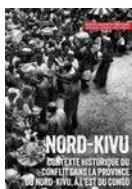
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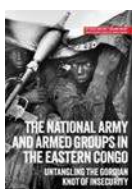
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The Ebb and Flow of Stabilization in the Congo

This briefing examines the mixed approach of MONUSCO towards the implementation of the I4S and suggests that it would be appropriate for the UN mission and its partners to continue to advance this framework.

SINCE THE START OF 2019, A SERIES OF MURDERS, VIOLENT ROBBERIES AND KIDNAPPINGS HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN PERIPHERAL NEIGHBOURHOODS OF GOMA. THE RAPID RISE IN VIOLENT CRIME HAS ALARMED CITY RESIDENTS AND LED TO CALLS FOR THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SECURITY SERVICES TO RESPOND MORE EFFECTIVELY. THIS REPORT MAPS OUT THE DYNAMICS AND EXPERIENCES OF, AND RESPONSES TO, URBAN INSECURITY IN GOMA, AND MAKES THE CASE FOR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POLICYMAKERS TO ENGAGE SERIOUSLY WITH THE URBAN DIMENSION OF INSECURITY IN THE EASTERN CONGO.



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