

16 dead including 5 children in new eastern DR Congo massacre

03/06/2020 19:27 by admin

Sixteen civilians, five of them children, were killed overnight in a fresh massacre in the eastern DR Congo province of Ituri, a local official and a UN source said on Wednesday.

Moroccan soldiers from the UN mission in DRC (Monusco) ride in a vehicle as they patrol in the violence-torn Djugu territory, Ituri province, eastern DR Congo.(AFP file photo)

Kinshasa: Sixteen civilians, five of them children, were killed overnight in a fresh massacre in the eastern DR Congo province of Ituri, a local official and a UN source said on Wednesday.

“The toll, which is still provisional, is of 16 people killed by knives or gunfire. The people killed are four men, seven women and five children all aged under five,” the administrator of Djugu territory, Adel Alingi, told AFP.

The toll was separately confirmed by a source in the United Nations’ peacekeeping force, MONUSCO.

The attack unfolded at a village in the area of Mambisa, north of the Ituri capital Bunia, the sources said.

The authorities attributed it to a notorious ethnic militia called CODECO, for the Cooperative for the Development of the Congo.

The organisation is mainly drawn from the Lendu ethnic group, who are predominantly farmers and clash repeatedly with the Hema community of traders and herders.

Nearly 300 civilians have been killed since the start of the year in attacks blamed on CODECO, while the UN says around 200,000 people have fled their homes.

UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet, in a visit to Ituri in late January, said “crimes against humanity” had been perpetrated.

Tens of thousands of people were killed in Hema-Lendu fighting between 1999 and 2003.

A surge in violence in 2003 triggered the European Union’s first military mission outside Europe -- Operation Artemis, under which a rapid-response force was deployed for three months to dampen the fighting.

Ituri is one of several provinces gripped by militia violence in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, a country the size of continental western Europe.

- AFP