



## COI QUERY

Country of Origin

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women, including sexual and domestic violence, conflict-related sexual violence, trafficking for sexual exploitation, traditional harmful practices, and early and forced marriage; legislation; social attitudes; availability of state protection; access to support services</b>
<b>Reference period</b>	January 2022 to 6 February 2024
<b>Topic(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><a href="#">Overview</a><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><a href="#">Sexual and domestic violence</a></li><li><a href="#">Conflict related sexual violence</a></li><li><a href="#">Trafficking for sexual exploitation</a></li><li><a href="#">Traditional harmful practices</a></li><li><a href="#">Early and forced marriage</a></li></ul></li><li><a href="#">Legislation</a></li><li><a href="#">Social attitudes</a></li><li><a href="#">Availability of state protection</a></li><li><a href="#">Access to support services</a></li></ol>
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## COI QUERY RESPONSE – Democratic Republic of the Congo

### **Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women, including sexual and domestic violence, conflict-related sexual violence, trafficking for sexual exploitation, traditional harmful practices, and early and forced marriage; legislation; social attitudes; availability of state protection; access to support services**

#### 1. Overview

##### Sexual and domestic violence

The 2022 Freedom House report described that SGBV in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was ‘common’,<sup>1</sup> whilst the 2022 annual report by the United States Department of State (USDOS) specified that rape was ‘common’<sup>2</sup> and sexual harassment ‘occurred throughout the country’.<sup>3</sup> USDOS further indicated that ‘rape and other forms of gender-based violence [GBV] were widespread throughout the country, even in areas without armed conflict’, and that due to cultural and social reasons, ‘survivors seldom reported’ cases and ‘perpetrators were rarely punished’.<sup>4</sup> In a 2023 article, UN Women illustrated that ‘52% of women in the DRC are survivors of domestic violence and 39% of Congolese women report having been threatened or harmed’.<sup>5</sup>

Multiple sources have described that there has been an increase in sexual violence in eastern DRC,<sup>6</sup> with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) attributing it to ‘the presence of armed actors, a scarcity of basic resources (i.e. water, food and fuel) and unsafe living conditions’.<sup>7</sup> Care International, an international humanitarian agency, described that internal displacement ‘continues to expose women and girls to high levels of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation’.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2022 – Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2022, [url](#)

<sup>2</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 34

<sup>3</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 35

<sup>4</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 34

<sup>5</sup> UN Women, DRC: Bringing women’s civil society organisations together, 10 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF, UNICEF alert over ‘sickening’ levels of sexual violence in eastern DR Congo, 18 May 2023, [url](#); UNOCHA, UN sounds the alarm over rampant violence and rising humanitarian needs in eastern Congo, 19 June 2023, [url](#); UNFPA, Protection Cluster, Gender-Based Violence continues to surge in eastern DRC, 8 September 2023, [url](#); UNHCR, UNHCR warns of mounting violence against women and girls in eastern DRC, 14 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> UNFPA, Protection Cluster, Gender-Based Violence continues to surge in eastern DRC, 8 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>8</sup> Care International, Cases of sexual exploitation and harassment on the rise in the DRC, 11 July 2023, [url](#)



According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), GBV is ‘rampant with more than 31,000 cases registered in the first three months of 2023 alone’.<sup>9</sup> According to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), between 17 and 30 April 2023, 670 victims of sexual violence were treated by MSF in camps for displaced people around Goma, in North Kivu, and that ‘[a]lmost all’ of the victims were women and ‘most’ were attacked ‘while searching for food or firewood outside of the displacement camps’.<sup>10</sup>

## Conflict-related sexual violence

A September 2023 article by the Associated Press (AP), quoting the UN’s humanitarian office’s operations director, described that ‘gender-based violence “is being perpetrated on a massive and distressing scale” with more than 35,000 survivors seeking access to treatment and services after attacks in just the first six months of 2023 in the three provinces [North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri]’.<sup>11</sup>

Freedom House indicated that ‘rebels and government soldiers have regularly been implicated in cases of rape and sexual abuse’, with convictions for these offenses being ‘rare’.<sup>12</sup> USDOS noted that ‘while sexual violence was a problem throughout the country, most cases took place in areas affected by the internal conflict’ and that ‘[a]rmed groups frequently used rape as a tactic of conflict’.<sup>13</sup> USDOS further added that ‘FARDC [Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo], PNC [Congolese National Police], ANR [National Intelligence Agency], armed groups and civilians perpetrated widespread sexual violence’.<sup>14</sup>

The annual report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) covering 2023 indicated that more than 100 armed groups were active in the Eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, and Tanganyika, and that many of their commanders have ‘been implicated in war crimes’ including ‘sexual violence’.<sup>15</sup> The same report added that the ‘Rwanda-backed’ armed group, the ‘M23’, have committed war crimes in areas under their control in North Kivu, including rape.<sup>16</sup> USDOS also noted that ‘large-scale abuses’ including GBV continued, by other armed groups such as the Cooperative for the Development of the Congo and the ISIS-Democratic Republic of the Congo [also known as the Allied Democratic Forces] in parts of North Kivu and Ituri Provinces.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> UNOCHA, UN sounds the alarm over rampant violence and rising humanitarian needs in eastern Congo, 19 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>10</sup> MSF, Alarming numbers of sexual violence victims in camps around Goma, 9 May 2023, [url](#)

<sup>11</sup> AP, An alarming humanitarian crisis and massive sexual violence wrack eastern Congo, UN official says, 6 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>12</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2022 – Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2022, [url](#)

<sup>13</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 34

<sup>14</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 16

<sup>15</sup> HRW, World Report 2023 – Democratic Republic of Congo, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>16</sup> HRW, World Report 2023 – Democratic Republic of Congo, 11 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>17</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 3



The 2022 USDOS report indicated that, according to United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) reporting, ‘government agents raped and sexually abused women and girls during arrest and detention, as well as during military action’.<sup>18</sup> The same source indicated that there were ‘credible reports’ that the state security forces (SSF) ‘subjected individuals, including minority groups and journalists, to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment and rape and sexual violence’.<sup>19</sup> On sexual harassment, USDOS indicated that, according to local reports, the SSF and government agents ‘incited, perpetrated, or explicitly or implicitly condoned sexual harassment’.<sup>20</sup>

Citing figures from UNJHRO, USDOS reported, that from January through June 2022, there were 239 cases of conflict-related sexual violence affecting women and children, in which ‘nearly 18 percent of these violent crimes were attributable to state agents’, notably FARDC soldiers and the PNC agents.<sup>21</sup> The same source added that ‘most of the sexual violence attributable to state agents was committed in North and South Kivu Provinces’.<sup>22</sup>

## Trafficking for sexual exploitation

According to the 2023 trafficking report by USDOS, covering April 2022 to March 2023, trafficking in persons is mostly internal and ‘involves labor trafficking in artisanal mining sites, agriculture, domestic servitude, or armed group recruitment of children in combat and support roles, as well as sex trafficking’.<sup>23</sup> In the eastern region of the country, notably in North Kivu, Ituri, South Kivu, and Tanganyika provinces, armed groups and criminal networks engage in human trafficking, ‘including unlawful child soldier recruitment and use, labor trafficking in artisanal mining, and sex trafficking’.<sup>24</sup> Criminal networks engaging in sex trafficking ‘frequently’ bring victims from the provinces to the capital.<sup>25</sup>

The USDOS trafficking report further indicated that ‘the government reported initiating 207 investigations, including 62 for sex trafficking, 52 for labor trafficking, and 93 for unspecified forms of trafficking; and prosecuting 27 alleged traffickers, including 18 for labor trafficking and nine for unspecified forms of trafficking’.<sup>26</sup> The source added that, according to observers, ‘perpetrators of sexual violence, including sex trafficking, were rarely held accountable, and security forces sexually abused and exploited victims, including children, with impunity’.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 34

<sup>19</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 6

<sup>20</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 35

<sup>21</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 16-17

<sup>22</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 16-17

<sup>23</sup> USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Person report: Democratic Republic of the Congo, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>24</sup> USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Person report: Democratic Republic of the Congo, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>25</sup> USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Person report: Democratic Republic of the Congo, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>26</sup> USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Person report: Democratic Republic of the Congo, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>27</sup> USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Person report: Democratic Republic of the Congo, 15 June 2023, [url](#)



Additional or corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

## Traditional harmful practices

Without providing further details, UN Women indicated that ‘27% of women in the DRC are victims of harmful traditional practices’.<sup>28</sup> The 2022 USDOS report indicated that, according to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), some abuses committed against children, including sexual violence against young girls, are attributable to ‘harmful traditional and religious practices’.<sup>29</sup> The same source provided the example that ‘[p]erpetrators allegedly targeted children because they believed harming children or having sex with virgins could protect against death in conflict or bring them better luck with mining, and children often died because of these rapes’.<sup>30</sup> The USDOS report also indicated that ‘sexual mutilation’ was ‘common’ and used as a tactic in areas of armed conflict.<sup>31</sup> The same source noted that children with disabilities or a speech impairment are labelled as ‘witches’, resulting in parental abandonment and exorcism by churches that includes isolation, beatings, whipping, starvation, and forced ingestion of purgatives, and that ‘accusations of witchcraft often targeted women and resulted in killings’.<sup>32</sup>

Additional information could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints of this query.

## Early and forced marriage

USDOS described that ‘while the law requires consent and prohibits marriage of boys and girls younger than age 18, many marriages of underage children took place, in part due to continued social acceptance’.<sup>33</sup> USDOS also described that ‘dowry payments greatly incentivized underage marriage, as parents forcibly married daughters to collect dowries or to finance dowries for sons’.<sup>34</sup> The same source, citing UNFPA, reported that as a method to ‘protect a girl from sexual violence’, some parents considered child marriage as ‘her husband would be responsible for her safety’.<sup>35</sup> Freedom House noted that ‘although the legal

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<sup>28</sup> UN Women, DRC: Bringing women’s civil society organisations together, 10 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>29</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 41

<sup>30</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 41

<sup>31</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 34

<sup>32</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), pp. 35, 41

<sup>33</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 41

<sup>34</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 42

<sup>35</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 42



minimum age for marriage is 18, many women are married earlier'.<sup>36</sup> The same source stated that 'rebel commanders have abducted girls into forced marriages'.<sup>37</sup>

A 2022 research paper, which surveyed internally displaced persons in displacement sites in areas including North Kivu, conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labour Organization (ILO) and a human rights group called Walk Free, concluded that amongst the respondents, 'armed groups were most frequently reported to be responsible for the forced marriage (27 %), followed by a spouse (24 %), and then parents (19 %) and other family members (14 %).'<sup>38</sup> The same source further added that '[r]ape and sexual violence were also common experiences among those forced to marry by armed groups' and that forced marriage occurred 'in the context of extremely high levels of sexual violence against women due to the ongoing conflict'.<sup>39</sup>

## 2. Legislation

Article 15 of the 2006 Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo indicates the following:

[Informal translation]

### **'Article 14**

Public authorities ensure the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and ensure the protection and promotion of their rights.

...

They take measures to combat all forms of violence against women in public and private life.

...

The law establishes the terms of application of these rights.

### **Article 15**

Public authorities ensure the elimination of sexual violence.

Without prejudice to international treaties and agreements, any sexual violence committed against any person, with the intention of destabilizing, breaking up a family and causing the disappearance of an entire people, is made a crime against humanity punishable by law'.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2022 – Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2022, [url](#)

<sup>37</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2022 – Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2022, [url](#)

<sup>38</sup> IOM, ILO, Walk Free, 2022, No escape: Assessing the relationship between slavery-related abuse and internal displacement in Nigeria, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, [url](#), p. 66

<sup>39</sup> IOM, ILO, Walk Free, 2022, No escape: Assessing the relationship between slavery-related abuse and internal displacement in Nigeria, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, [url](#), p. 66

<sup>40</sup> DRC, Constitution de la République Démocratique du Congo, 18 February 2006, [url](#)



The 2022 USDOS country report indicated that the law provides penalties for parents convicted of forcing a child to marry of up to 12 years' hard labour and a fine, and if the child is under age 15, the penalty is doubled.<sup>41</sup> However, the same source noted that 'authorities rarely enforced the law' and that 'provisions in the law do not clarify who has standing to report forced marriage as a crime or if a judge has the authority to do so'.<sup>42</sup>

The 2023 USDOS trafficking in persons report indicated that Law No. 22/067 amended the penal code to criminalise 'all forms of labor trafficking and some forms of sex trafficking'.<sup>43</sup> Article 3 of Law No. 22/067 'prescribed penalties of 10 to 20 years and a fine of 30 million to 60 million Congolese francs [approximately EUR 10 000 to 20 000], which increased to a minimum of 15 years' imprisonment and a fine of 150 million Congolese francs [approximately EUR 50 000] if the offense involves abduction, threat or use of force, or other forms of coercion'.<sup>44</sup>

Regarding female genital mutilation/circumcision (FGM/C), Article 3 of the Penal Code indicated the following:

Paragraph 7: Sexual mutilation

Article 174g

Anyone who commits an act that harms the physical or functional integrity of a person's genital organs will be punished with a penalty of two to five years of penal servitude and a fine of two hundred thousand constant Congolese francs [approximately EUR 70].

When the mutilation results in death, the penalty is penal servitude for life'.<sup>45</sup>

The 2022 USDOS country report indicated that 'the law on sexual violence criminalizes rape of all persons, but the law was not often enforced'.<sup>46</sup> The same source added that 'the legal definition of rape does not include spousal rape or intimate partner rape'.<sup>47</sup> The minimum penalty for a conviction was a prison sentence of five years, and 'courts sometimes imposed such sentences in rape convictions in the infrequent instances when these crimes came to trial'.<sup>48</sup> According to USDOS, 'some prosecutions occurred for rape and other types of sexual

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<sup>41</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 41

<sup>42</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 42

<sup>43</sup> USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Person report: Democratic Republic of the Congo, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>44</sup> USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Person report: Democratic Republic of the Congo, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>45</sup> DRC, Loi n° 06/018 du 20 juillet 2006 modifiant et complétant le Décret du 30 janvier 1940 portant Code pénal congolais, 2006, [url](#), para. 7

<sup>46</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 34

<sup>47</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 34

<sup>48</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 34





violence, but the government generally did not enforce the law effectively'.<sup>49</sup> The source also described that the law 'prohibits extrajudicial settlements (for example, a customary fine paid by the perpetrator to the family of the survivor), but such practices still occurred'.<sup>50</sup>

USDOS indicated that sexual harassment was prohibited by law, and if convicted, there was a minimum prison sentence of one year; but 'there was little or no effective enforcement of the law'.<sup>51</sup> On domestic violence, 'the law does not provide any specific penalty for domestic violence despite its prevalence'.<sup>52</sup>

Additional information could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

### 3. Social attitudes

Sources stated that most cases of SGBV are not reported,<sup>53</sup> 'due to the fear of stigmatization, exclusion, retaliation, rejection, and a culture of impunity'.<sup>54</sup> Care International further indicated that 'with a high prevalence of SGBV in the country and the stigma associated with it, many women continue to suffer in silence' and 'many cases' of sexual assault were 'unreported'.<sup>55</sup> An article by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) from prior to the reference period, illustrated, for example, that figures of SGBV in the eastern Tanganyika Province are thought to be higher, as reporting it 'remains taboo in most communities' and 'survivors of sexual violence can face stigma and possible exclusion from their families'.<sup>56</sup>

Concerning rape victims, USDOS stated that 'most survivors of rape did not pursue formal legal action due to insufficient resources, lack of confidence in the justice system, family pressure, and fear of subjecting themselves to humiliation, reprisal, or both'.<sup>57</sup> USDOS added that 'husbands often divorced wives who were survivors' of SGBV, and victims of sexual violence by law were allowed to waive their appearance in court and permitted to closed hearings to protect confidentiality.<sup>58</sup> The 2022 research survey by the IOM, ILO and Walk

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<sup>49</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 34

<sup>50</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 34

<sup>51</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 35

<sup>52</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 35

<sup>53</sup> Care International, Cases of sexual exploitation and harassment on the rise in the DRC, 11 July 2023, [url](#); AP, An alarming humanitarian crisis and massive sexual violence wrack eastern Congo, UN official says, 6 September 2023, [url](#)

<sup>54</sup> Care International, Cases of sexual exploitation and harassment on the rise in the DRC, 11 July 2023, [url](#)

<sup>55</sup> Care International, Health sector in DRC crumbles amidst conflict negatively impacting survivors of sexual assault, 14 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>56</sup> UNHCR, UNHCR gravely concerned about systematic sexual violence in DR Congo's Tanganyika Province, 13 August 2021, [url](#)

<sup>57</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 35

<sup>58</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 34



Free, noted that respondents in the study who were victims of spousal rape or forced marriage, ‘spoke of the shame associated with rape or sex outside of marriage’ and that the alternative to marriage was rejection by families and communities’.<sup>59</sup>

#### 4. Availability of state protection

The 2022 USDOS country report indicated that the Congolese National Police have a ‘special Child Protection and Sexual Violence Prevention Squadron, and much police training addressed sexual and gender-based violence’.<sup>60</sup> The same source also indicated that UNJHRO ‘supported capacity-building sessions’ on matters including ‘the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence for FARDC and PNC officials’.<sup>61</sup>

According to a report on socio-economic conditions in Kinshasha by the Danish Immigration Service (DIS), state protection mechanisms are ‘limited’ and there is a ‘lack of infrastructure’, including shelters or emergency houses for victims of GBV.<sup>62</sup> The same source also indicated that ‘women are usually referred to family members for support’.<sup>63</sup>

Concerning rape, USDOS indicated that ‘both international organizations and local NGOs reported that women rape survivors were sometimes forced to pay a fine to return to their families and to gain access to their children’.<sup>64</sup> On domestic violence, ‘although the law considers assault a crime, police rarely intervened in perceived domestic disputes’.<sup>65</sup>

Additional or corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

#### 5. Access to support services

Freedom House noted that ‘courts have officially granted reparations to the targets of sexual violence and other serious crimes, but these are rarely paid in practice’.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> IOM, ILO, Walk Free, 2022, No escape: Assessing the relationship between slavery-related abuse and internal displacement in Nigeria, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, [url](#), p. 67

<sup>60</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>61</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>62</sup> Denmark, DIS, Country of Origin Information Report on Socioeconomic conditions in Kinshasha, October 2022, [url](#), p. 46

<sup>63</sup> Denmark, DIS, Country of Origin Information Report on Socioeconomic conditions in Kinshasha, October 2022, [url](#), p. 46

<sup>64</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 34

<sup>65</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 35

<sup>66</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2022 – Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2022, [url](#)



USDOS reported that the government did provide sexual and reproductive health services to victims of gender-based violence.<sup>67</sup> Emergency contraception was available for rape victims, ‘but women could not always access them in time’.<sup>68</sup> Services were free for rape victims, to prevent unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease, but according to human rights observers, ‘women who went to police to report rape were often asked to pay for actions needed to investigate and prosecute the crime’.<sup>69</sup> USDOS added that ‘the government established mobile clinics for gender-based violence survivors in remote areas’.<sup>70</sup> The International Rescue Committee (IRC), in collaboration with local NGO partners, has also ‘launched an emergency response’ to protect victims of SGBV by providing ‘counseling, healthcare, and legal assistance to those affected’.<sup>71</sup>

Concerning human trafficking, USDOS reported that the Ministry of Social Affairs was the ‘primary government agency responsible for coordinating provision of victim services, including medical care, psycho-social support, legal aid, and socioeconomic reintegration services’.<sup>72</sup> The same source added that the government ‘did not provide specialized services to trafficking victims distinct from other vulnerable groups and officials usually referred trafficking victims to NGO-run shelters for services’.<sup>73</sup> USDOS indicated that the ‘majority of services to trafficking victims, including shelter, vocational and educational training, medical and psycho-social care, and legal support’, were provided by NGOs.<sup>74</sup>

USDOS further noted that a hotline for reporting sexual and gender-based violence was operated by the government, receiving 2,679 calls between April and October 2022, and identifying 26 cases of trafficking in persons.<sup>75</sup>

Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

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<sup>67</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 36

<sup>68</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 36

<sup>69</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 36

<sup>70</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 36

<sup>71</sup> IRC, DRC: Women and children most at risk following recent escalation of violence, warns IRC, 2 November 2023, [url](#)

<sup>72</sup> USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Person report: Democratic Republic of the Congo, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>73</sup> USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Person report: Democratic Republic of the Congo, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>74</sup> USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Person report: Democratic Republic of the Congo, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>75</sup> USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Person report: Democratic Republic of the Congo, 15 June 2023, [url](#)



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