

# New lava lake lets DR Congo volcano 'breathe', experts say

September 26 2021

---



After the eruption in late May, the disappearance of lava from the crater had sparked fears that it remained buried under Goma.

The reappearance of a lava lake in the crater of the Nyiragongo volcano in eastern DR Congo is a good sign, experts said Sunday, four months

after a major eruption killed 32 people.

Nyiragongo's eruption on May 22-23 spewed out lava that buried homes in its wake, stopping just short of the northern outskirts of Goma, a city of some 600,000 people.

Celestin Kasereka Mahinda, the scientific director of the Goma Volcanology Observatory, said the "reappearance of the lava lake in Nyiragongo's crater" dates from September 18.

"It is not a phenomenon that presents an imminent risk of a new eruption, but rather a phenomenon that allows the volcano to breathe," he told AFP.

"It is a natural sign. The appearance of this lake of fire in the crater will minimise earthquakes in the volcanic area of Goma."

Nyiragongo, a strato-volcano nearly 3,500 metres (11,500 feet) high, straddles the East African Rift tectonic divide.

In the days following the eruption in May, mighty tremors shook Goma, and scientists feared a rare but potentially [catastrophic event](#)—a "limnic eruption" under nearby Lake Kivu that would send [carbon dioxide gas](#), dissolved in the depths of the water, up to the surface and suffocate everyone in the vicinity.

The Democratic Republic of Congo authorities ordered the evacuation of 400,000 people as a precaution. The residents have largely returned since [seismic activity](#) fell back.

After the eruption, the disappearance of lava from the crater sparked fears that it remained buried under Goma.

"Today Nyiragongo found a way to breathe, which is a good sign," Mahinda said.

"Fear would have persisted if the volcanic chimney remained blocked."

In the previous [major eruption](#) in 2002, around 100 people died and swathes of eastern Goma were destroyed.

Nyiragongo's deadliest [eruption](#), in 1977, claimed more than 600 lives.

© 2021 AFP

Citation: New lava lake lets DR Congo volcano 'breathe', experts say (2021, September 26) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-09-lava-lake-dr-congo-volcano.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.