



Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies
pour la Stabilisation en République
démocratique du Congo

United Nations Organisation Stabilization
Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo



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DRC: new UN report highlights the need to protect political and civil rights ahead of key elections

KINSHASA/GENEVA, 8 December 2015: A UN report published Tuesday highlights a worrying clampdown on opposition, media and civil society in the DRC since the beginning of the year and stresses the need to guarantee political and civil rights ahead of key elections.

The report, prepared by the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UNJHRO)*, documents human rights violations in relation with the electoral process between 1 January and 30 September 2015, including summary executions, death threats, arbitrary arrests and detention, excessive use of force by security forces, and restrictions of the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

“This trend of restricting freedom of expression and violating the security of those taking a critical stance on the government’s actions, indicates a shrinking of the democratic space likely to compromise the credibility of the electoral process,” the report warns.

In total, the report documents 143 human rights violations linked to the electoral process. After the violent repression of demonstrations by security forces in January 2015 which resulted in the extrajudiciary killing of at least 20 people by State agents, a second wave of human rights violations started in July 2015. Threats, arbitrary arrests and detention have been targeting mostly media workers, members of civil society and political opponents.

The report shows that the majority of the violations took place in provinces where opposition parties and civil society are prominent. They include the provinces of Kinshasa, North and South Kivu and Eastern Kasai.

Members of the Congolese national police (PNC) and the national intelligence agency (*Agence nationale de renseignements*, ANR) are responsible for most of the human rights violations documented in the report.

At least 649 people were arbitrarily arrested and detained in connection with the electoral process during the first nine months of the year, many of whom were denied contact with their families or lawyers. The ANR is primarily responsible for these arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions which often take place *incommunicado*.

“Arbitrary arrests and detentions, in particular of political opponents, civil society activists or demonstrators, were a frequent means of intimidation used by the security forces to restrict freedoms of expression and of peaceful assembly,” says the report.

The report also warns against the manipulation of the judiciary. *“Political interference into the course of trials and the lack of progress in the prosecution of some of the accused demonstrate the instrumentalization of justice in order to silence those individuals and as a result to intimidate civil society as a whole,”* says the report.

The report welcomes the agreement between the national electoral Commission and the national human rights institution (*Commission nationale des droits de l’homme - CNDH*) to monitor and investigate all allegations of human rights violations before, during and after the electoral process. It also acknowledges some progress in ensuring accountability for specific human rights violations. However there has so far been no investigation or legal proceedings for violations related to the on-going electoral process.

“I urge the Congolese authorities to ensure accountability for the very serious human rights violations documented in this report,” said the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein. *“This is particularly important as DRC is heading towards a very packed electoral period. If the upcoming elections are to be credible and peaceful, the authorities must ensure that all citizens, independently of their political opinions, can fully participate in an open and democratic debate, and that civil society activists, media workers and political opponents are able to carry out their activities without fear.”*

“This report points to some possibility of electoral related violence before the elections. I am therefore going to be engaging the Congolese authorities and the international partners to carefully consider its recommendations and to continue to take the appropriate steps to ensure a free, fair and credible electoral process,” said the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Maman S. Sidikou.

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The full report is available here:

<http://monusco.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=10770&language=en-US>
http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/CD/UNJHRODecember2015_en.pdf

* *The UN Joint Human Rights Office, which was established in February 2008, comprises the Human Rights Division of the UN Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the DRC (OHCHR-DRC).*

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