

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

Index: AFR 62/5971/2017

28 March 2017

### **Renewal of MONUSCO's mandate, an opportunity to recommit to civilian protection in the DRC.**

The mandate renewal of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is an opportunity for the UN to reaffirm its commitments and step up its efforts to prevent further deterioration of the human rights situation and protect civilians in the DRC and the entire Great Lakes region, Amnesty International said today.

The UN Security Council is set to vote on a resolution for the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate on 29 March.

Amnesty International is calling on the Security Council to ensure that MONUSCO is able to implement its mandate to protect civilians and prevent further deterioration of the human rights situation in the country.

Given escalating tensions and human rights violations and abuses following the delay of elections scheduled for last year, the mission urgently needs resources to protect civilians during the electoral process, including during public demonstrations and election rallies. To this end the UN Secretary General has proposed an increase in, and rapid deployment of UN Police Units. Currently, MONUSCO has 1,090 police.

In light of rising attacks against civilians, increased inter-ethnic violence, the apparent inability of the state to protect civilians in some areas and the volatility surrounding the electoral process, MONUSCO's role is essential. Violations and abuses, including unlawful killings and inter-ethnic violence in Beni, Rutshuru, Kongo Central, Tanganyika and, most recently, in Kasai where two UN experts and four of their Congolese colleagues went missing on 17 March, raise questions about the state's ability or willingness to protect civilians in these areas.

Despite being defeated by the UN and DRC forces in 2013, the Movement of the 23 March (M23), an armed group responsible for serious human rights abuses in 2012-13 in eastern DRC, has recently re-emerged in Rutshuru.

The risk to human rights is further exacerbated by the effects of conflicts and crises in neighboring countries, including Burundi, South Sudan and the Central African Republic.

### **Recommendations to the United Nations Security Council:**

- Renew MONUSCO's mandate and ensure that the mission has the resources to fulfil its mandate to protect civilians;
- Call for full cooperation between neighboring countries to implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework on the DRC and the Great Lakes region to support the DRC and the UN in their efforts to protect civilians;
- Continue to support the UN Joint Human Rights Office's independent investigations on human rights violations and crimes under international law;
- Call on DRC authorities to conduct credible and independent investigations on human rights violations and crimes under international law allegedly committed by the security forces, including unlawful killings, during protests and military operations and, if there is sufficient admissible evidence, prosecute all those suspected of criminal responsibility in fair trials before ordinary civilian courts and without recourse to death penalty;
- Call upon the DRC authorities to respect the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, release those detained for peacefully exercising their rights, re-open arbitrarily closed media outlets and lift the ban on protests organized by the opposition and civil society organizations.

### **Background**

The DRC failed to meet its constitutional deadline to organize presidential elections in November 2016. To avoid a constitutional crisis, the government sought an interpretation from the Constitutional Court in May 2016 which ruled that President Kabila could stay in power until his successor is elected.

Delays in organizing elections have led to a shrinking of civic space as protests against the postponement were met with arbitrary and abusive force by the security forces.

Amnesty International, the UN Joint Human Rights Office and other organizations have documented the use of unnecessary and excessive force by the security forces, including unlawful killings.

To date, no effective investigations have been conducted and no security officer has been suspended or brought to justice in relation their action.

Protests by the opposition and civil society groups have been banned in several cities, including Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and Goma, by local authorities. At the same time, public meetings and demonstrations organized by the Presidential Majority (MP) have been facilitated by the same officials. Dozens of pro-democracy youth activists continue to be arrested and arbitrarily detained for their opposition to the delays in the organization of the elections.

The government is also using the justice system to target key political opponents – especially targeting those who had been members of the MP and left the party over the dispute on the revision of the constitution to allow President Joseph Kabila to seek another term.

Public document

\*\*\*\*\*