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Public Statement

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Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Marie-Thérèse Nlandu case demonstrates need for urgent reform of police and security sector

Amnesty International is encouraged by the acquittal on 30 April by a Kinshasa military court of Congolese politician and lawyer Marie-Thérèse Nlandu and her co-defendants. The organization has campaigned for Marie-Thérèse Nlandu's unconditional release since her arrest in November 2006 on what AI considers were politically-motivated and trumped-up charges of insurrection and possession of firearms.

Amnesty International is now calling on the DRC government to prohibit in law all further trials of civilians by military court, to investigate claims that defendants in this case were ill-treated or tortured in detention, and to ensure that they are provided with adequate reparation, including guarantees of non-repetition.

The organization also urges the new government to act decisively to end political repression in the DRC and stamp out detention-related human rights violations.

Amnesty International is concerned about other political opposition activists and supporters who remain in unlawful detention and in some cases without access to lawyers, families and doctors. Others have 'disappeared' after last being seen in security force custody, including Dr Faustin Sosso, doctor to opposition leader Jean-Pierre Bemba, who has not been seen since he was arrested in August 2006 in Kinshasa, reportedly by elements of the *Garde Républicaine*, presidential guard.

Amnesty International is calling on the DRC authorities to:

- o investigate the 'disappearance' of Dr Faustin Sosso and other cases of arbitrary arrest, unlawful detention and acts of ill-treatment or torture by the security services;
- o ensure that all detainees are promptly brought before the proper civilian judicial authorities to determine the legality of their arrest and detention;
- o end incommunicado detention and give unrestricted access to all civilian and military detention sites by independent human rights monitors, including UN (MONUC) officials;
- o reform the country's police and security services, making them publicly accountable and ending the overtly political use of certain forces, including the *Garde Républicaine* and the *Direction des renseignements généraux et services spéciaux* (DRGS), "Special Services" police; and
- o reform the DRC's military penal code to prohibit trial of civilians by military court, bringing it in line with the DRC's Constitution and international human rights standards.