

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Democratic Republic of Congo: Further violence feared as clashes erupt**

Amnesty International today called for calm and restraint by the security forces in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as clashes between police and protestors have already taken place and further demonstrations are planned for 30 June. The date marks what was originally intended to be the ending of the period of transitional government in the DRC.

The organization urged the DRC government to take measures to ensure that everyone -- including human rights defenders, journalists, and demonstrators -- can freely and safely express their opinions concerning the transitional political process in the country.

Amnesty International condemned the death of four civilians killed by police during peaceful protests in the city Mbuji-Mayi on 25 June. Two women were reportedly raped during the clashes, while dozens of civilians were injured and 19 arrested.

The clashes erupted between supporters of the opposition Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) and the national police in Mbuji-Mayi, a strong-hold of the UDPS. The police forces responsible for the human rights violations were reportedly part of a 250-strong *Police d'Intervention Rapide* (PIR), or Rapid Intervention Police, sent to Mbuji-Mayi on 21 June to maintain order.

Amnesty International condemned the excessive and indiscriminate use of force by police and security forces against the demonstrators and called on the DRC government to prevent further security force violence, set up an independent and impartial inquiry into the killings that have occurred, and make those findings public.

In the run up to 30 June, opposition parties are planning further demonstrations in the capital and the rest of the country. Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of civilians planning to take part in the peaceful demonstrations, as police have previously used excessive force to break up such protests.

#### **Background**

The 2002 Global and All-Inclusive Peace Agreement set 30 June 2005 as the end of the political transition period, culminating in the holding of the DRC's first democratic national elections. Although the peace agreement allowed for the extension of the transitional period by up to one year, some opposition leaders, such as UDPS leader Etienne Tshisekedi, have called for demonstrations to demand the end of the transitional institutions, and for a boycott of voter registration currently underway in the capital, Kinshasa. In January 2005, DRC security forces used excessive force to suppress protests in Kinshasa against the postponement of elections. Dozens of protestors and bystanders were shot dead or wounded when soldiers and police used lethal force.

Criticism levelled against the transitional government at the national and international level have deplored the fact that the transitional government remains beset by factionalism and has failed to respect the conditions they agreed to by signing the All-Inclusive Peace Agreement. They have not so far neither ensured the human rights and security protection of civilians, nor succeeded in implementing fundamental reforms, such as the integration of the army. The government still needs to move promptly and efficiently to complete military and police reform, essential to ensure that elections are to take place in conditions that are safe, free and fair. At the moment, this is far from certain.