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## **DRC: Action needed to investigate a decade of crimes**

The publication of the UN mapping report documenting gross human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a significant first step, but concrete action is needed to ensure that those responsible are held to account, Amnesty International said today.

“The cycle of violence and abuses will only stop if those responsible for crimes under international law are held to account” said Salil Shetty, Amnesty International’s Secretary General. “The publication of this report should be the beginning of a process to ensure accountability in the Great Lakes region and not the end of it”

The UN mapping report is the most comprehensive investigation into serious human rights violations committed in the DRC between March 1993 and June 2003.

“It is now up to the Congolese government - with support of regional governments and donors - to ensure the conclusions of the report are translated into concrete action. This means investigating and prosecuting those responsible for the horrific crimes perpetrated in the DRC and awarding reparations to the victims,” said Salil Shetty.

Amnesty International urges the Congolese government and the UN to establish a Task Force as a matter of urgency, to develop a long-term, comprehensive action plan to end impunity for crimes committed in the country during the decade covered by the report as well as the crimes that continue to be committed on a daily basis.

The UN mapping report also highlights the inability of the Congolese justice system to try those responsible for war crimes despite some efforts by the government and international community to reform it.

While appalling crimes have been committed in the DRC by tens of thousands of perpetrators, the report states that only 12 trials for such crimes have taken place since 1993 - all in military rather than civilian courts - and only two of those trials involved crimes committed between 1993 and June 2003.

In addition, only four people have been named in arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes committed in DRC. These include General Bosco Ntaganda, who the DRC government not only refuses to arrest, but has promoted to the rank of general in its armed forces.

Amnesty International urges the Congolese government and the international community to devote more resources to building an independent and effective justice system.

“Unless perpetrators are held criminally responsible and the truth about human rights abuses is established, peace and stability throughout the Great Lakes region will not be achieved,” warned Salil Shetty.

“Recent reports of mass rapes in the Walikale region, eastern DRC, show all too clearly how vulnerable the civilians still are, and how the lack of investigation and prosecution of grave abuses against civilians send a signal that perpetrators can continue to act in complete impunity” added Salil Shetty.

Amnesty International calls on the DRC government and the UN to give more coherent and sustained attention to the professionalization of the national army, including the implementation of an effective vetting procedure, a task that the UN mapping report qualifies as an essential foundation for any credible justice initiative in the DRC.

#### Notes to Editors

- On 1 October the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights released a comprehensive mapping report documenting grave human rights violations that occurred between 1993 and 2003 in the DRC.
- This report documents the most serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law that were committed in the DRC between 1993 and 2003, analyses the numerous systemic failings of the DRC judicial system, which has so far been unable to hold the perpetrators to account. The report presents a series of possible options to bring those perpetrators to justice.
- Civilians in the DRC continue to be the victims of mass killings, extrajudicial executions, forced recruitment of child soldiers, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence and enforced disappearances.