



AI Index: IOR 40/7163/2017
26 September 2017

-Check against delivery-

ORAL STATEMENT

ITEM 10: Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on OHCHR report on DRC

BLEAK OUTLOOK FOR CIVIC SPACE AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

UN Human Rights Council
Thirty-sixth session
11-29 September 2017

Mr. President,

Amnesty International commends the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for its report on the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Amnesty International continues to receive reports of violations in the context of the delayed elections. Our organisation has received reports that security forces used tear gas and live bullets against unarmed protestors who were demanding the publication of the electoral calendar on 31 July, resulting in at least 4 injured. Over 100 people were arrested across the country during these protests, including around a dozen journalists who were covering the events unfold. While most of those arrested were released, at least five individuals, considered prisoners of conscience by Amnesty International, remain in detention in Lubumbashi. In early August 2017, authorities briefly blocked the use of social media, further limiting peoples' right to freedom of expression and information.

In Kasai, victims of the conflict are still waiting for truth, justice and reparation following the violence that started in August 2016. Hundreds of civilians have been killed, and more than 1.4 million have been internally displaced. Although dozens of mass graves have been found in the Kasai region, the government does not appear to have carried out credible investigations into the abuses and violations, including into the killing of two UN experts and the disappearance of their four Congolese colleagues. Testimonies from refugees in Angola indicate that violations were committed by the government forces and militia groups supported by the government forces¹.

Amnesty International urges the Council to call on DRC to release all political prisoners and halt all actions that violate the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression. Our organisation also calls on the DRC to ensure that the team of international experts on the Kasai situation is able to work independently and is given unfettered access to carry out its mandate.

¹ Report of a Mission of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – accounts of Congolese fleeing the crisis in the Kasai region, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AfricaRegion/Pages/CDReports.aspx>

Thank you, Mr. President.