

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVISTS ARRESTED HOURS BEFORE STRIKE

Six youth activists from the youth movement Lutte pour le Changement (LUCHA) were arrested in Goma just hours before a general strike called for by the political opposition and civil society. The general strike was in protest against delays in the preparations for the 2016 presidential elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Six activists from the youth movement LUCHA were arrested in the early morning of 16 February in Goma. Armed security agents forced their way into the house where **Rebecca Kavugho, Serge Sivyavugha, Justin Kambale Mutsongo, Melka Kamundu, John Anipenda, and Ghislain Muhiwa** had gathered. The six had prepared some pamphlets for the general strike with messages urging the government to ensure that the 2016 general elections were held within constitutional deadlines.

Authorities announced on 17 February that the six would be brought before the High Court of Goma on 18 February for an accelerated hearing. This judicial procedure is applied to people who are 'caught in the act of intentionally committing a crime'.

At the first hearing on 18 February, the court identified the six accused and evidence against them was presented by the public prosecutor. They have been charged with 'inciting racial hatred' and 'belonging to a criminal organization'. The hearing will resume at noon on 19 February.

Amnesty International considers the six to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Please write immediately in French or your own language:

- Urging the Congolese authorities to drop the charges against the six activists detained in Goma and immediately and unconditionally release them;
- Urging them to ensure that the six activists are not subjected to any torture or other ill-treatment while in detention and are given prompt access to their family, lawyer and any medical attention they may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 APRIL 2016 TO:

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Alexis Tambwe Mwamba

Ministère de la Justice

228 Avenue de Lemera

BP 3137

Kinshasa-Gombe

RDC

Email: minjustdh@gmail.com

Salutation: Honourable Minister

Minister of Interior and Security

Professor Evariste Boshab

Ministry of Interior and Security

Avenue Roi Baudouin

Kinshasa-Gombe

RDC

Email: ngomamundulu@gmail.com

Salutation: Honourable Minister

And copies to:

Prime Minister

His Excellency Augustin Matata Ponyo

Office of the Prime Minister

5 avenue Roi Baudouin

Kinshasa/Gombe, DRC

Email: cabinet@primature.cd

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

DRC's President Joseph Kabila has been in office since 2001 and was declared winner of the 2006 and 2011 elections. The Congolese constitution limits a president to two consecutive terms. As the November 2016 elections draw closer, calls for President Kabila to step down have intensified, as has the government's crackdown on those voicing these views.

Opposition leaders and civil society organizations called for a general strike (known as *ville morte*, or dead city) on 16 February. They asked the population to stay at home to protest delays in the preparation for the presidential elections due to take place in DRC by the end of 2016. LUCHA supported the general strike.

LUCHA is a youth movement that was created in Goma, the provincial capital of North Kivu in the DRC, in 2012. The movement is known for its peaceful actions. They organize sit-ins, demonstrations and other actions to claim their rights and those of the people of DRC. They have continuously called for the organization of elections within constitutional deadlines and for respect of presidential term limits outlined in DRC's Constitution.

The authorities have accused LUCHA of being a criminal movement, set up with the aim of disturbing public order. At least 19 of their members and sympathisers are currently detained.

Name: Rebecca Kavugho, Serge Sivyavugha, Justin Kambale Mutsongo, Melka Kamundu, John Anipenda, and Ghislain Muhiwa
Gender m/f: Both

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