

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **DRC: THE GOVERNMENT MUST PROVIDE UNHINDERED MOVEMENT TO THE UN EXPERT TEAM MANDATED TO COLLECT AND PRESERVE EVIDENCE ON THE KASAI CRISIS**

The Human Rights Council ('the Council') has adopted a resolution requesting the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to dispatch a team of international experts to collect and preserve information, and to determine the facts and circumstances concerning alleged human rights violations and abuses, and violations of international humanitarian law, in the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Amnesty International had hoped that the Council would take a more robust approach and establish a commission of inquiry, or similar mechanism on the Kasai region. However, we welcome this resolution as an initial step towards uncovering the truth and establishing accountability for the serious human rights violations and abuses committed in the region.

Amnesty International trusts that the team of experts will be assembled and dispatched to the region as soon as possible. The team should be able to conduct their work in a fully independent manner, in accordance with international standards, as mandated by the Council. We expect that, in accordance with the resolution, the protection of victims and witnesses will be central to the work of the expert team. As the High Commissioner for Human Rights stated today, this "underlines the need for the team of experts to operate independently."<sup>1</sup>

The full implementation of this mandate will testify to the DRC's commitment to improving

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21797&LangID=E>

the situation on the ground, and its seriousness in holding members of its own armed forces to account for any violations that the expert team may find they have committed. Amnesty International calls on the DRC government to demonstrate its willingness to cooperate fully with the team by providing immediate and unhindered access to the country and all relevant sites and persons, allowing them to fulfil their mandate effectively. Amnesty International also calls on the international community to support the DRC in this endeavour, including by ensuring the resolution's implementation.

The international community should remain vigilant, and the Council should remain ready to take action if there is no progress on the implementation of this resolution.

#### Background

Violence in the Kasai region of the DRC has forced 1.3 million people to flee their homes since August 2016. Presumed Kamuena Nsapu and other non-state actors have carried out numerous human rights abuses. Hundreds of extrajudicial executions and other human rights violations committed by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) have contributed to violence which is now affecting five provinces. According to the Papal Envoy to the DRC more than 3300 people have lost their lives in the Kasai region since October 2016. In April, OHCHR confirmed the existence of 42 mass graves.

Despite promises made by the DRC government since March 2017, there has not been a comprehensive, credible and independent national investigation into these human rights violations and abuses. Because of the lack of progress at the national level, in the last three weeks the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, and a coalition of 262 Congolese groups, Amnesty International, and eight other international nongovernmental organizations have called on the Council to urgently establish an international investigation into the situation in the Kasai region of the DRC.