



AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index Number: AFR 62/8104/2018
20 March 2018

Amnesty International denounces the brutal repression on peaceful protests in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Statement delivered during the Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the Democratic Republic of Congo at the 37th Session of the Human Rights Council

Amnesty International is concerned by the ongoing suppression of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly in the context of a disputed electoral process in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators.

On 31 December 2017, and 21 January and 25 February 2018, the Catholic Lay Coordination Committee organized peaceful protests to demand the implementation of confidence-building measures that include “the release of political prisoners, media freedom and freedom for opposition leaders to return from exile”¹ ahead of the elections set on 23 December 2018. In Kinshasa, these protests were violently disrupted by the security forces, including elements of the Presidential Guard, the Military Police and Military Intelligence, who fired live ammunition and tear gas at protesters only carrying rosaries and singing religious hymns, sometimes from behind the crowd and in the churches.

We welcome the fact that the Commission set up by the government to investigate the 31 December and 21 January incidents in Kinshasa, acknowledged that serious violations resulted from excessive use of force, including lethal force, by security forces .

Amnesty International calls on the government of the DRC to ensure that:

- Those suspected to be responsible for the crackdown, including senior officers and the members of government who ordered or condoned these violations are brought to justice;
- The systematic and unlawful prohibitions of peaceful protests are lifted;
- All recommendations of the Commission are fully and promptly implemented and its investigations are extended to cover other provinces and incidents.

¹ See : <https://laprosperiteonline.net/2017/12/21/mise-en-oeuvre-integrale-de-laccord-rdc-le-comite-laic-de-coordination-sen-remet-a-la-rue/>