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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Operation Likofi during 2018 in Kinshasa

1. Overview of the Operations Likofi and the *Kuluna* gang

The phenomenon of the youth gangs known as *Kuluna* is believed to have appeared in Kinshasa around the year 2000, arising out of a general state of lawlessness.¹ The *Kulunas* are described as 'mostly teenage boys and young men in organized criminal gangs of about 10 to 20 members' who are 'known to carry machetes, broken bottles, or knives, and to threaten or exact violence to extort money, jewellery, mobile phones, and other valuables'.² Although the phenomenon was originally limited to the poorest districts of Kinshasa, such as Yolo, Limete, Matete and Makala Kinshasa, it gradually expanded to the rest of the capital, as well as to other cities.³

As a response against the *Kuluna* gangs, the Congolese government set up a dedicated police unit,⁴ and, on 15 November 2013, the first Operation Likofi was launched, targeting suspected *Kulunas*.⁵ Soon after its commencement, the operation was expanded through what was called Operation Likofi II, which took place between 15 December 2013 and 15 February 2014, and reportedly targeted criminals working inside the army and the police.⁶ On 25 February 2014, the then interior minister Richard Muyej announced the commencement of Operation Likofi Plus, which would target urban criminality in all DRC provinces⁷, while additionally tasked to 'combat new forms of banditry being experienced in Kinshasa, such as robberies of financial and banking institutions'.⁸ Following the forced return of more than 70 000 DRC nationals from Brazzaville in May 2014, the authorities decided, *inter alia*, that Operation Likofi Plus would be intensified 'with a view to strengthening security on transit and reintegration sites'.⁹ On 16 October 2014, interior minister Muyej announced the launch of operation Likofi III, aimed at countering what was described as a 'resurgence' of the *kulunas*.¹⁰

¹ Global Initiative, Criminals or vigilantes? The Kuluna gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo, 17 June 2021, [url](#), pp. 3,4

² HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#)

³ HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#)

⁴ Global Initiative, Criminals or vigilantes? The Kuluna gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo, 17 June 2021, [url](#), p. 11

⁵ HRW, DR Congo: Police Operation Kills 51 Young Men and Boys, 18 November 2014, [url](#); HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#); UN News, DR Congo: UN rights chief condemns government's decision to expel envoy, 19 October 2014, [url](#)

⁶ HRW, DR Congo: Police Killed, 'Disappeared' 34 Youth, 21 February 2019, [url](#); HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#); UNJHRO, Report of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office On Human Rights Violations Committed by Agents of the Congolese National Police During Operation Likofi in Kinshasa between 15 November 2013 And 15 February 2014, October 2014, [url](#), para. 6

⁷ HRW, DR Congo: Police Killed, 'Disappeared' 34 Youth, 21 February 2019, [url](#); HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#); Radio Okapi, RDC: le ministre de l'Intérieur annonce l'opération «Likofi +», (DRC: the Minister of the Interior announces the "Likofi +" operation), (unofficial translation by EASO), 25 February 2014, [url](#)

⁸ UNJHRO, Report of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office On Human Rights Violations Committed by Agents of the Congolese National Police During Operation Likofi in Kinshasa between 15 November 2013 And 15 February 2014, October 2014, [url](#), footnote 8

⁹ UN OCHA, Expulsés de Brazzaville - Update du 7 mai 2014 (Expelled from Brazzaville - Update of May 7, 2014, (unofficial translation by EASO), 8 May 2014, [url](#)

¹⁰ HRW, DR Congo: Police Killed, 'Disappeared' 34 Youth, 21 February 2019, [url](#); HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#)

In 2014, Human Rights Watch noted that some politicians used the *Kulunas* for protection or for intimidating their opponents during elections.¹¹ Similarly, in its 2021 report, think-tank Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime reported that some DRC politicians see the *Kuluna* gangs ‘as a contractible workforce’, to be used for ‘intimidating political rivals, disrupting their public gatherings, and providing protection to politicians, among other duties’.¹² Moreover, the *Kulunas* cooperated with police and army staff during operations, and some of the gang members reportedly include relatives of police or army officers.¹³

The United States Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) stated that corruption among the police is ‘rampant’.¹⁴ Global Initiative describes DRC’s police and army as being notorious for both ‘their disproportionate use of force’ as well as for their ‘illegal revenue-generating schemes’. According to the source, the ‘gang–police complicity is so well known that, in Congolese street language, criminal elements within the police are referred to as “*Kulunas* in uniform”’.¹⁵

In a 2014 report investigating the first Operation Likofi, Human Rights Watch stated that the police ‘acted illegally and ruthlessly, killing at least 51 young men and teenage boys and forcibly disappearing 33 others’. Moreover, ‘many who were targeted had nothing to do with the *kuluna*. Some were street children, while others were youth falsely accused by their neighbours in unrelated disputes’.¹⁶

Referring to events that took place in the capital during the first Operation Likofi between 2013–2014, Human Rights Watch reported that the estimated 350 police members involved in the operation ‘committed widespread human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, looting, extortion, and intimidation of family members and witnesses to abuses’.¹⁷ In the aftermath of the operation, the police ‘went to great lengths to cover up their crimes’. According to Human Rights Watch, family members and witnesses were warned not to speak about the events, as were journalists who tried to ‘document or broadcast information about operation Likofi killings’. Moreover, the police ‘told doctors not to treat suspected *kuluna* who were wounded during the police operation, and government officials instructed morgue employees not to talk to anyone about the bodies piling up in the morgue because it concerned a “confidential government matter”’.¹⁸

The 2018 Operation Likofi IV

Operation Likofi IV was conducted in the capital Kinshasa between May and September 2018. More specifically, on 10 April 2018, Henri Mova, the vice prime minister and interior and security minister at that time, presented his plan to deal with urban criminality, and according to Human Rights Watch, soon after, ‘on the night of May 3 to 4 [2018], police dragged four alleged *kulunas* from their homes and fatally shot them, leading residents to believe that a new “Operation Likofi” had begun’.¹⁹ However, already in early 2018, various police activities targeting the *Kulunas* were reported by the local media. For instance, on 19 March 2018, the police in Kinshasa announced it had detained 53 suspected criminals during ‘a special search operation’ in neighbourhoods affected by the presence of the *Kulunas*.²⁰ On 13 April 2018, the Attorney General of DRC, Flory Kabange Numbi, met with Kinshasa judicial and police authorities, in order to set new strategies to combat

¹¹ HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#)

¹² Global Initiative, Criminals or vigilantes? The Kuluna gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo, 17 June 2021, [url](#), p. 7

¹³ Global Initiative, Criminals or vigilantes? The Kuluna gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo, 17 June 2021, [url](#), pp. 3,4; HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#)

¹⁴ OSAC, Democratic Republic of Congo Country Security Report, 14 September 2021, [url](#)

¹⁵ Global Initiative, Criminals or vigilantes? The Kuluna gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo, 17 June 2021, [url](#), p. 9

¹⁶ HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#)

¹⁷ HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#)

¹⁸ HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#)

¹⁹ HRW, DR Congo: Police Killed, ‘Disappeared’ 34 Youth, 21 February 2019, [url](#)

²⁰ Radio Okapi, La police a présenté 53 présumés criminels à Kinshasa (Police presented 53 suspected criminals in Kinshasa), (unofficial translation by EASO), 20 March 2018, [url](#)

the *kulunas* in the capital.²¹

According to Human Rights Watch, during operation Likofi IV, security forces in Kinshasa ‘summarily killed at least 27 young men and boys and forcibly disappeared 7 others’. The advocacy group documented extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances in the Kalamu, Kisenso, and Limete communes of the capital. As reported by Human Rights Watch, victims of ‘the extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances [...] included known or former *kulunas* and local residents who, acquaintances said, were not involved in criminal activities’. The same source described that ‘police officers, often wearing civilian clothes, apprehended without warrant suspected gang members [...] at night from their homes or other locations. In many cases, the police blindfolded and bound the victims, took them to unidentified locations, and killed them’. Testimonies collected by Human Rights Watch referred that various police units were involved in Operation Likofi IV, including the Anti-Criminal Police of Kinshasa province, under the command of Colonel Jean Lazubiene; the National Intervention Legion (LENI), under General Elvis Palanga. The same source argued that General Kasongo was ‘linked’ to the Likofi IV operation. While interior minister, ‘Mova has responsibility over the police and overall responsibility for the killings and disappearances’. Nevertheless, in his communication with Human Rights Watch, General Kasongo denied ‘the existence of any police operation targeting *kulunas*’, while during ‘a phone conversation with Human Rights Watch on [18 December 2018], [interior minister] Mova called the allegations “absurd”’.²²

On 20 September 2018, a media source reported that a police investigation had been opened, following the discovery of ‘at least four bodies of young people killed in mysterious circumstances’. The source quoted the statements of several people interviewed by AFP, who accused ‘hooded Congolese police officers of kidnapping’ young *Kuluna* suspects ‘as part of an operation against urban banditry’.²³ Another media source quoted the father of one of the victims, stating that he had seen at least nine bodies, including his son’s. According to the testimony, shortly before the bodies were discovered, hooded men claiming to be the police came into his house, stole valuables and took the boy with them. General Kasongo rejected the involvement of the police in these acts.²⁴

2. Involvement of General Kanyama, Colonel Lily, and General Kasongo in the 2018 Operation Likofi IV

General Célestin Kanyama

Information regarding any potential involvement of General Kanyama specifically in Operation Likofi IV of 2018 could not be found among the sources consulted by EASO within time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

At the start of operation Likofi, in November 2013, ‘General Kanyama was the police commander for Kinshasa’s Lukunga district, until his promotion to provincial commissioner for Kinshasa in late December 2013’. Although the command of operation Likofi ‘officially alternated every 15 days between Kanyama and General Ngoy Sengelwa, [at that time the] commander of the police force’s National Intervention Legion (Légion nationale d’intervention, LENI)’²⁵, General Kanyama was the *de*

²¹ Radio Okapi, Kinshasa: Flory Kabange Numbi annonce « une traque sans merci contre les Kulunas » (Kinshasa: Flory Kabange Numbi announces "a merciless hunt against the Kulunas"), (unofficial translation by EASO), 14 April 2018, [url](#)

²² HRW, DR Congo: Police Killed, ‘Disappeared’ 34 Youth, 21 February 2019, [url](#)

²³ VOA Afrique (VOA Africa), Enquêtes après la mort mystérieuse de plusieurs jeunes en RDC (Investigations after the mysterious death of several young people in the DRC), (unofficial translation by EASO), 20 September 2018, [url](#)

²⁴ Radio Okapi, Kinshasa: trois corps sans vie retrouvés au quartier Kauka (Kinshasa: three lifeless bodies found in the Kauka district), (unofficial translation by EASO), 16 September 2018, [url](#)

²⁵ HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#)

facto commander during the entire operation.²⁶

In its November 2014 report, Human Rights Watch quoted the accounts of ‘various sources, including five police officers’, who claimed that ‘Kanyama gave orders to kill suspected *kuluna*’, and that ‘Kanyama himself was present during some of the attacks’. Human Rights Watch also quoted a ‘senior government official’, claiming that ‘although Kanyama officially reports to the national police commissioner, General Bisengimana’, he was ‘difficult to control and ‘took orders’ from various ‘senior security officials outside the police hierarchy’.²⁷

In January 2015, ‘during Kanyama’s tenure as Kinshasa police commissioner, over 40 people were killed during demonstrations in Kinshasa, including at least 20 people fatally shot by security forces’.²⁸

On 14 December 2016, General Kanyama warned opposition groups against demonstrating against president Joseph Kabila, by stating before the media that ‘anyone who tried to participate in the demonstrations against president Kabila “will be treated as an enemy of the state.” [Kanyama] said the police would “use all force and do everything in its power to ‘neutralize’ them”’.²⁹

On 17 April 2017, the DRC police authorities stated that General Kanyama had been dismissed from his position as head of police of Kinshasa, without providing any reasons for the action. According to the source, Kanyama was temporarily replaced by his assistant, Colonel Palanga Nawe.³⁰

A July 2017 media report stated that General Kanyama was appointed as ‘divisional commissioner’, and was also named as the new ‘director general of police schools and training’.³¹ A subsequent media report of November 2018 confirmed that Kanyama continued, at that time, to be in this position.³²

On 23 June 2016, the United States imposed sanctions on General Kanyama.³³ The EU similarly imposed its own sanctions on various individuals in DRC, including on Kanyama, on 12 December 2016.³⁴ On 9 December 2021, the EU renewed the sanctions on Kanyama for a further year, stating:

‘As Commissioner of the Congolese National Police (PNC), Célestin Kanyama was responsible for the disproportionate use of force and violent repression in September 2016 in Kinshasa.

In July 2017, Célestin Kanyama was appointed Director-General of the PNC’s training

²⁶ U.S. Department of the Treasury, Treasury Sanctions High-Ranking Government Security Official for Role in Violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 23 June 2016, [url](#); UNJHRO, Report of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office On Human Rights Violations Committed by Agents of the Congolese National Police During Operation Likofi in Kinshasa between 15 November 2013 And 15 February 2014, October 2014, [url](#), para. 23; HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#)

²⁷ HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#)

²⁸ U.S. Department of the Treasury, Treasury Sanctions High-Ranking Government Security Official for Role in Violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 23 June 2016, [url](#)

²⁹ AI, DRC: Dismissed! Victims of 2015-2018 brutal crackdowns in the Democratic Republic of Congo denied justice, 16 June 2020, [url](#), p. 32

³⁰ RFI, RDC: pourquoi le chef de la police de Kinshasa a-t-il été suspendu? (DRC: why was the Kinshasa police chief suspended?), (unofficial translation by EASO), 19 April 2017, [url](#)

Africa News, Controversial DR Congo police chief sacked, replaced by assistant, 18 April 2017, [url](#)

³¹ Radio Okapi, RDC: Joseph Kabila remplace Bisengimana par Amuli à la tête de la police, (DRC: Joseph Kabila replaces Bisengimana by Amuli at the head of the police), (unofficial translation by EASO), 17 July 2017, [url](#)

³² Radio Okapi, Joseph Kabila préside la cérémonie de la fin de la formation de 3600 policiers à Kisangani, (Joseph Kabila presides over the ceremony at the end of the training of 3,600 police officers in Kisangani), (unofficial translation by EASO), 16 November 2018, [url](#)

³³ VOA, US Imposes Sanctions on Kinshasa Police Chief in DRC, 23 June 2016, [url](#); U.S. Department of the Treasury, Treasury Sanctions High-Ranking Government Security Official for Role in Violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 23 June 2016, [url](#)

³⁴ EU, Council Regulation (EU) 2016/2230 of 12 December 2016 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 1183/2005 imposing certain specific restrictive measures directed against persons acting in violation of the arms embargo with regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 12 December 2016, [url](#)

schools.

In October 2018, when he was in that function, police officers intimidated and deprived journalists of freedom after the publication of a series of articles on the misappropriation of police cadet rations. Célestin Kanyama played a role in those events.

Owing to his role as a senior PNC official, which he retains today, he bears responsibility for the recent human rights violations committed by the PNC. Célestin Kanyama has therefore been involved in planning, directing or committing acts that constitute serious human rights violations or abuses in the DRC.³⁵

Colonel Lily Tambwe

Information regarding any potential involvement of Colonel Lily Tambwe specifically in Operation Likofi IV of 2018 was scarce among the sources consulted by EASO within time constraints. However, the following information may be relevant.

In March 2016, a media report stated that Colonel Lily Tambwe was, at that time, the commander of the Gombe municipality police station in Lukunga district, Kinshasa.³⁶

On 21 January 2018, a young woman was shot and killed in the forecourt of a church in Kinshasa during a police operation against an ongoing protest. According to witnesses quoted in an Amnesty International report, 'the Police Commissioner for Kinshasa and the Police Commissioner for the Lukunga District gave orders to shoot indiscriminately and disproportionately at peaceful protesters'. Another witness claimed to have seen 'Colonel Lily' that day, along with 'several dozen police officers in the streets around the parish'.³⁷

General Sylvano Kasongo Kitenge

In July 2017, General Sylvano Kasongo Kitenge was named as the new permanent head of police of Kinshasa.³⁸ According to accounts collected by Human Rights Watch, police commissioner for Kinshasa, General Kasongo, was 'linked' to the 2018 Likofi IV Operations, during which at least 27 young men were reportedly killed and 7 forcibly disappeared by security forces. Although General Kasongo denied even the existence of police operations targeting *Kulunas*, Human Rights Watch gathered testimonies within police forces referring to his involvement in the 2018 Likofi campaign that took place between May and September 2018.³⁹

3. Legal actions taken against individuals responsible for civilian deaths during operation Likofi IV

In November 2020, Human Rights Watch reported that there had been, by that time, 'no investigation nor prosecution' for the alleged abuses by security forces during operation Likofi IV.⁴⁰

³⁵ EU, Council Decision (CFSP) 2021/2181 of 9 December 2021 amending Decision 2010/788/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 9 December 2021, [url](#), Annex

³⁶ Radio Okapi, RDC: les jeunes femmes encouragées à s'enrôler dans la police, (DRC: young women encouraged to enlist in the police), (unofficial translation by EASO), 9 March 2016, [url](#); DRC, Ordonnance 77-100 du 6 avril 1977 fixant les limites de la ville de Kinshasa, ainsi que le nombre de ses sous-régions et zones, leur dénomination et leurs limites (Ordinance 77-100 of April 6, 1977 fixing the limits of the city of Kinshasa, as well as the number of its sub-regions and zones, their denomination and their limits, (unofficial translation by EASO), 6 April 1977, [url](#), Art. 3

³⁷ AI, DRC: Dismissed! Victims of 2015-2018 brutal crackdowns in the Democratic Republic of Congo denied justice, 16 June 2020, [url](#), pp. 35, 37

³⁸ Jeune Afrique (Young Africa), RDC: qui est Sylvano Kasongo Kitenge, le nouveau chef de la police de Kinshasa? (DRC: who is Sylvano Kasongo Kitenge, the new Kinshasa police chief?), (unofficial translation by EASO), 21 July 2017, [url](#)

³⁹ HRW, DR Congo: Police Killed, 'Disappeared' 34 Youth, 21 February 2019, [url](#)

⁴⁰ HRW, Awaiting Justice for Police Killings in DR Congo, 16 November 2020, [url](#)

Within the time constraints for drafting this COI Query Response, no other information could be found regarding legal actions taken against individuals responsible for civilian deaths specifically during the 2018 Operation Likofi IV. However, information on this topic and related to previous Likofi Operations might be relevant.

Between August and September 2014, official investigations were launched by the DRC government into the allegations of police misconduct during operation Likofi. Writing in November 2014, Human Rights Watch reported that, by that time, it knew of ‘nine police officers who have been on trial since the start of Operation Likofi for killings committed in Kinshasa. Of those, four were convicted of murder, assassination, homicide due to imprudence, or involuntary homicide’, while one was acquitted and the remaining four trials were ongoing.⁴¹ In October 2014, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) reported that ‘several families of the victims did not file complaints, due to fear of reprisals’.⁴² Moreover, both Human Rights Watch and UNJHRO documented instances where military authorities investigating killings by the security forces, were pressured by government officials or by superiors to halt the investigation and legal proceedings against the alleged perpetrators.⁴³ In May 2016, the report of the inquiry on operation Likofi was released.⁴⁴ According to Global Initiative, while ‘14 police officers were later arrested and convicted without the ability to appeal, while three others were convicted *in absentia* [...], no commanding officers have ever been investigated or brought to justice in relation to the operation’.⁴⁵

In July 2017, General Dieudonné Amuli Bahigwa replaced Charles Bisengimana as the Commissioner General of the Congolese National Police, aided by two deputies, Mushid Yav Patience et Bengama Célestin.⁴⁶ According to a media report of 18 December 2021, General Amuli remained in charge as head of police at that time.⁴⁷

Also in July 2017, General Sylvano Kasongo Kitenge was appointed as the head of police of Kinshasa.⁴⁸ Subsequent media reports of August 2021 confirmed that General Kasongo remains the head of police of Kinshasa as well as the deputy divisional commissioner of the Congolese national police’.⁴⁹

⁴¹ HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#)

⁴² UNJHRO, Report of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office On Human Rights Violations Committed by Agents of the Congolese National Police During Operation Likofi in Kinshasa between 15 November 2013 And 15 February 2014, October 2014, [url](#), paras. 29, 30

⁴³ HRW, Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC, 17 November 2014, [url](#);
UNJHRO, Report of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office On Human Rights Violations Committed by Agents of the Congolese National Police During Operation Likofi in Kinshasa between 15 November 2013 And 15 February 2014, October 2014, [url](#), paras. 29, 30

⁴⁴ Global Initiative, Criminals or vigilantes? The Kuluna gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo, 17 June 2021, [url](#), p. 12; USDOS, 2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Democratic Republic of the Congo, 3 March 2017, [url](#)

⁴⁵ Global Initiative, Criminals or vigilantes? The Kuluna gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo, 17 June 2021, [url](#), p. 12

⁴⁶ Radio Okapi, RDC: Joseph Kabila remplace Bisengimana par Amuli à la tête de la police, (DRC: Joseph Kabila replaces Bisengimana by Amuli at the head of the police), (unofficial translation by EASO), 17 July 2017, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Radio Okapi, Dieudonné Amuli : « Aucun policier rwandais ne se trouve en RDC », (Dieudonné Amuli: "No Rwandan policeman is in the DRC"), (unofficial translation by EASO), 18 December 2021, [url](#)

⁴⁸ Radio Okapi, RDC: Joseph Kabila remplace Bisengimana par Amuli à la tête de la police, (DRC: Joseph Kabila replaces Bisengimana by Amuli at the head of the police), (unofficial translation by EASO), 17 July 2017, [url](#)

⁴⁹ DW, Une série noire des bavures policières en RDC, (A black series of police blunders in the DRC), (unofficial translation by EASO), 2 August 2021, [url](#); Radio Okapi, Kinshasa : les policiers n’ont pas le droit d’utiliser les armes létales contre les citoyens, rappelle Sylvano Kasongo (Kinshasa: police officers do not have the right to use lethal weapons against citizens, recalls Sylvano Kasongo), (unofficial translation by EASO), 3 August 2021, [url](#)

4. Treatment of individuals and organisations who took legal action against the authorities believed to be responsible for civilian deaths during the 2018 Operation Likofi IV

Information regarding individuals and organisations who took legal action against the individuals believed to be responsible for civilian deaths specifically during the 2018 Operation Likofi IV could not be found among the sources consulted by EASO within time constraints. Although information on this topic related to previous Likofi Operations might be relevant.

Global Initiative reported that, in 2011, incumbent president Kabila recruited *Kulunas* to conduct attacks against opposing political demonstrations and to terrorise the population. Activists and journalists who disclosed this were arrested or intimidated by the security services.⁵⁰

In 2014, United Nations Human Rights office in Kinshasa⁵¹ and Human Rights Watch⁵² documented extrajudicial killings perpetrated by security forces in Kinshasa. Following the publication of the reports, the Congolese government expelled the UN human rights director in Congo. Despite denying the facts documented by the UN and Human Rights Watch, the DRC government launched an internal investigation resulting in the conviction of some low-level policemen in 2016.⁵³

⁵⁰ Global Initiative, *Criminals or vigilantes? The Kuluna gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo*, 17 June 2021, [url](#), p. 8

⁵¹ UN OHCHR, *DRC: UN calls for prosecution of perpetrators of summary executions and enforced disappearances in Kinshasa*, 15 October 2014, [url](#)

⁵² HRW, *Operation Likofi - Police Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Kinshasa, DRC*, 17 November 2014, [url](#)

⁵³ Global Initiative, *Criminals or vigilantes? The Kuluna gangs of the Democratic Republic of Congo*, 17 June 2021, [url](#), p. 12

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