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The human rights situation in the DRC deteriorated in 2015. There was some progress on efforts to tackle sexual violence but other human rights continued to be violated, especially related to the electoral process. There were arbitrary arrests and imprisonments, reports of torture of political activists, attacks on freedom of speech, and extra-judicial killings by state agents.

In 2015, the UK's human rights work in the DRC focused on protecting political space and preventing sexual and gender- based violence. We worked to build long-term stability in the east, through contributions to MONUSCO (UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the DRC), the work of the Department for International Development, and projects supported by the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund.

We were concerned about the tightening of political space during 2015. There were a number of arbitrary arrests of journalists, civil society figures and human rights defenders (HRDs). The British Embassy in Kinshasa monitors trials of political detainees on a regular basis, and raises concerns at the highest levels of the DRC government. We officially raised the Filimbi activist case, involving young people arrested in March and April 2015 at a workshop designed to encourage Congolese youth to perform their civic duties peacefully.

The DRC government made some progress in addressing impunity in the armed forces. In September the Military High Court delivered its verdict upholding the conviction of Colonel Mukalayyi for the murder of HRD Floribert Chebeya. In December, the National Assembly adopted legislation updating the Military Penal Code, abolishing immunity for these crimes for the Head of State and other government figures. However, we are concerned that many in the security forces continue to enjoy impunity for human rights violations.

We remain deeply concerned about the massacres in Beni, and are supporting MONUSCO in preventing future incidences and reducing human rights violations in the east of the country. We are particularly disturbed by the recent escalation in Nande- Hutu ethnic conflict in North Kivu province.

The UK funds projects that help victims of sexual violence in conflict to obtain justice. We are working with the DRC government to encourage use of [the International Protocol on the](#)

[Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict](#) by legal and medical practitioners. This work includes translation of the International Protocol into Swahili and Lingala to enable its effective use at a local level.

In 2016, the UK will continue to focus on political and civil society space and abuses related to the forthcoming Presidential elections. We will monitor arrests, detentions and disappearances of opposition and civil society figures, and will raise any concerns with the DRC government. We will continue to encourage the DRC government to take concrete steps to improve respect for human rights, particularly by taking action against armed groups in the east. We will also continue our work on the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative, funding a number of grassroots projects and working closely with Jeanine Mabunda, the DRC President's Personal Representative on the Fight Against Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment.

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