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Human Rights and Democracy Report 2016 - Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

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The human rights situation in the DRC deteriorated further during 2016, particularly as a result of activity by armed groups in eastern DRC, who remain responsible for the majority of abuses. However, there has been a significant increase (400%) of abuses related to elections. There was continued shrinkage of democratic space, particularly in relation to the electoral process as President Kabila's constitutional mandate drew to a close in December. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (JHRO) documented a total of 1,102 human rights violations, a huge increase since last year. The majority of incidents, for which the state was reportedly responsible, related to arbitrary arrests and detentions; spurious charges against opposition figures; attacks on freedom of speech; and extrajudicial killings by state agents. State human rights violations continued, including the disproportionate use of force by the security services of the DRC against supporters of the political opposition. Additionally, there have been accusations of grave and widespread human rights violations by security forces in the Kasai region in response to a local uprising. In August, the DRC's Family Code was revised, which was a positive outcome for gender, LGB&T and minority rights. The DRC currently ranks in the top ten countries for numbers of people in modern slavery, with more than 80,000 people affected.

The UK's human rights work focused on protecting political space and preventing sexual and gender-based violence. The FCO funded projects to help victims of sexual violence in conflict to obtain justice and worked 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. The UK continued to contribute towards long term stability in eastern DRC, through support to the MONUSCO (UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the DRC); the work of the Department for International Development (DFID); and projects and programmes supported by the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF). We remain deeply concerned about the risk of further massacres in and around the city of Beni, and are supporting MONUSCO in its work to prevent future incidences and reduce human rights violations and abuses in the east of the country. Our office in Goma has facilitated and driven the sharing of information about the massacres amongst those investigating a number of massacres in Beni territory.

In 2017, the UK will continue to focus on preventing human rights violations and abuses during the electoral period. 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 look for ways to include work against modern slavery and people trafficking in our existing and forthcoming programme activity. We will also continue our work on the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, funding a number of grassroots projects and working closely with the DRC President's Personal Representative on the Fight Against Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment, as well as other relevant ministries.

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