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## The State of the World's Human Rights; Democratic Republic of the Congo 2024

Attacks against civilians continued as the conflict between armed groups and government forces escalated. At least 100 civilians were killed as a result of indiscriminate shelling by government forces and armed groups. Government forces extrajudicially executed 250 people. There was an alarming increase in reported cases of sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. More than 7 million people were internally displaced – 80% of whom had fled armed conflict – and lived in dire conditions. The expansion of mining projects led to mass forced evictions and the denial of rights, including to housing, health, water and other essential services. The rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association were restricted, particularly in the Ituri and Nord-Kivu provinces where a form of martial law was imposed. Activists, opposition members, journalists and others were subjected to arbitrary arrests and detentions and denied the right to a fair trial. An opposition party member was given a prison sentence after he said he had been raped during his arbitrary detention. More than 120 prisoners died, and hundreds of women prisoners were raped at Makala Prison when, according to authorities, some inmates made an escape attempt. There was a spike in death sentences after the government said it would resume executions. The justice minister instructed the prosecutor general to initiate legal proceedings against those who advocated for LGBTI people's rights. The ICC prosecutor announced the renewal of investigations into crimes under the Rome Statute committed in Nord-Kivu province since January 2022.

### Background

In January, President Tshisekedi was sworn in for a second term following December 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections. The new government was sworn in six months after the elections, headed for the first time by a woman as prime minister.

Armed conflict in the east persisted as political processes stalled. In September, government forces fought against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), an armed group, in Nord-Kivu province. Meanwhile, Ugandan and government forces continued their military operations in Nord-Kivu and Ituri provinces against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a Ugandan armed group, and liberated at least 500 people who had been abducted by the ADF. These military operations resulted in further displacement of the population and a worsening humanitarian crisis.

Protests were held nationwide, including in the capital, Kinshasa, in relation to the armed conflict between the March 23 Movement (M23), an armed group allegedly supported by Rwanda, and Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) government forces and their allies. Protests were also about the alleged support of Western countries, including France, the UK and the USA, for Rwanda.

Inter-communal violence expanded in Kasai, Kwango, Kwilu, Mai-Ndombe and Tshopo provinces and resulted in further grave human rights violations.

In October, President Tshisekedi announced his intention to revise the 2006 constitution. The Catholic Church and other civil society actors warned that the move would further destabilize the country.

In August, the WHO declared a surge in Mpox cases “a public health emergency of international concern”.

Teachers in several provinces organized strikes demanding salary increases.

## Unlawful attacks and killings

Attacks against civilians continued as the conflict between armed groups and government forces escalated, leading to hundreds of deaths and many more injuries. Clashes between government forces on the one hand and armed groups M23, the Cooperative for Development of the Congo (CODECO) and ADF on the other, were responsible for most of the civilian killings.

At least 100 civilians were killed and many more injured as a result of the use by all parties of indiscriminate shelling in populated areas in Nord-Kivu. Government forces and M23 used explosive weapons in populated areas to attack and defend their positions.

Nineteen people were killed and at least 25 injured on 25 January after a rocket, believed to be fired by DRC forces, struck a house in Mweso, a

town in Nord-Kivu province.

On 4 March, at least 17 civilians were killed and 12 injured after a shell struck a group of civilians fleeing combat in Nyanzale town in Nord-Kivu. Witnesses said that the shell was launched from a hill controlled by M23.

The ADF was responsible for some of the deadliest attacks against civilians. In April, at least 28 civilians were killed in ADF attacks carried out following reports of the killing of two of its leaders, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, an NGO. In June, the group targeted and killed more than 200 civilians in two separate attacks in the territories of Beni and Lubero, prompting condemnation and calls by national, regional and international institutions, including the AU Commission, for the effective protection of civilians.

In August, nine civilians were killed in Bwito chiefdom, in Nord-Kivu, by M23 rebels who were allegedly pursuing FDLR members. Between October and November, M23 killed 15 civilians in Binza village, Rutshuru territory in Nord-Kivu, according to media reports citing civil society organizations and local leaders.

In August, government forces killed at least nine peaceful protesters in the town of Kilwa, Pweto territory in Haut-Katanga province, according to a civil society organization representative and several media reports. The victims were suspected of belonging to the Bakata Katanga, a political-religious group that has sporadically fought against government forces.

## Extrajudicial executions

At least 250 people were extrajudicially executed by government forces, according to the UN Joint Human Rights Office.

On 19 May, government forces executed two people, who had been held in their custody and suspected of being involved in a coup attempt to overthrow President Tshisekedi's government in May.

## Sexual and gender-based violence

Local and international organizations noted an alarming number of reported sexual violence cases, including conflict-related sexual violence. According to a UN report published in April 2024, 133,000 cases of sexual violence were registered in 2023, and the number of cases of conflict-related sexual violence doubled in the first quarter of 2024, in comparison to the same quarter in 2023.

In September, Médecins Sans Frontières said it had treated more than 25,000 survivors of sexual violence in 2023, and that this numerical trend continued in the first months of 2024. Most cases were treated in and

around internally displaced people's camps in the city of Goma, Nord-Kivu province. Around 40% of sexual violence survivors were girls, according to UNICEF.

Physicians for Human Rights, which spoke to 16 organizations providing services to survivors of sexual violence, noted that the increase in such violence was linked to various conflicts, particularly in connection with M23's resurgence and the intensified fighting between M23 and government forces.

## Internally displaced people's rights

Around 7.3 million people were internally displaced, according to OCHA, 80% of whom had fled due to clashes between various armed groups. More than half of those displaced were women. Most internally displaced people lived in dire conditions, with limited access to education, health, and sexual and reproductive services. The conditions were partly due to lack of funding from the international community to address the humanitarian crisis and the continuous attacks by armed groups against internally displaced people's camps.

## Forced evictions

In the city of Kolwezi in Lualaba province companies continued their expansion of industrial-scale mining for cobalt and copper, materials which are critical for the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy. These operations, as in previous years, led to forced evictions and other human rights violations. Affected individuals and communities said they were frustrated at the continuous forced evictions and lack of fair compensation for their losses. Community representatives told Amnesty International that those affected also faced other human rights violations associated with displacement, including the denial of access to education, health and water, and other essential services.

## Freedom of expression, association and assembly

Authorities continued to restrict the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. The "state of siege" (a form of martial law), imposed since May 2021, further restricted these rights for people in the Ituri and Nord-Kivu provinces. Its enforcement and continued renewal violated the constitution, and regional and international human rights obligations.

Pro-democracy activists, opposition members, human rights and environmental defenders, and journalists were subjected to arbitrary arrests and detentions (see below), judicial harassment and exile.

In February, security forces used tear gas to disperse peaceful demonstrations against the alleged support by some Western countries of the Rwandan government's military operations in the DRC and its backing of M23.

## Torture and other ill-treatment

In September, Jacky Ndala, a member of the opposition party Together for the Republic, publicly recounted for the first time his experiences during his arbitrary detention at the National Intelligence Agency (ANR) in 2022. He claimed that he was raped and subjected to inhumane detention conditions. A ruling party member stated on social media in September that she had instructed ANR officers to rape him. Authorities launched an investigation into his allegations, which were made in the context of widespread claims by activists about the use of torture and other ill-treatment in detention centres run by the ANR. On 18 December, Jacky Ndala was sentenced to two-and-a-half years' imprisonment for "spreading rumours" in connection with his allegations.

## Arbitrary detention and unfair trials

Youth activists remained unlawfully detained and scores of opposition members, journalists and others were arbitrarily arrested for criticizing the government or simply doing their legitimate work.

Opposition leader and businessman Seth Kikuni was arrested on 2 September and held incommunicado for several days before being presented to a public prosecutor. He was transferred to Makala Prison in Kinshasa on 28 September and charged with "inciting civil disobedience and spreading false information".

On 19 March, journalist Stanis Bujakera was released from prison having served a six-month sentence after he was convicted on false charges of "spreading false information". He had been arrested in September 2023.

King Mwamisyzo, a member of civil society movement Fight for Change (Lutte pour le Changement), remained in detention after being convicted and sentenced to five years' imprisonment in June 2023 on a trumped-up charge of "contempt of the army", for criticizing the state of siege.

## Inhumane detention conditions

In September, at least 129 prisoners were killed during what authorities described as an attempt by some inmates to escape from Makala Prison. According to the interior minister, 24 prisoners were shot dead by security forces while the rest died of suffocation in the overcrowded prison. The prison was built to hold 1,500 prisoners but, at the time, housed between

14,000 and 15,000. More than 250 women prisoners were raped during the incident, according to the UN.

## Death penalty

The last known execution took place in 2003. However, in March the then minister of justice announced that executions would resume to address “treason” in the army amid increasing armed conflicts, mainly due to the resurgence of M23; and to curb violence in urban areas, including Kinshasa. International and national organizations opposed the decision as a violation of the fundamental right to life and on grounds that the judicial system had demonstrated its limitations in ensuring that regional and international standards for fair trial were applied. Prior to the minister’s announcement, the president had described the justice system as “sick”. In October, OHCHR expressed concerns over the minister’s decision and noted a significant increase in death sentences passed by military courts since March.

In September, a military court passed death sentences against people convicted in relation to the May coup attempt. In October, a military court in Kinshasa sentenced to death a policeman involved in the killing in September of Gires Mukungi Manzanza, a member of the Commitment for Citizenship and Development political party.

## LGBTI people’s rights

Weeks after taking office in June, the justice minister instructed the prosecutor general to initiate legal proceedings against those who advocated for LGBTI people’s rights. Earlier, in April, as a member of parliament he claimed to have introduced a bill to criminalize consensual same-sex sexual relations.

## Right to truth, justice and reparation

In April, the ICC’s Trust Fund for Victims ended the Katanga Reparation Programme that had benefited victims of an armed attack on 24 February 2003 in Bogoro village, Ituri province. The ICC Trial Chamber II delivered the reparations order in 2017 which was confirmed on appeal in 2018, and reparations were implemented between 2017 and October 2023.

In September, President Tshisekedi named the new director general of the National Reparation Fund for Victims of Sexual Violence (FONAREV). Critics, including Nobel Peace Prize winner Denis Mukwege, raised concerns about FONAREV’s ineffectiveness. The fund was created in 2022 and placed under the office of the First Lady. In June, FONAREV had announced the launch of a process to identify victims of sexual violence linked to conflicts in Beni territory with a view to awarding compensation.

On 14 October, the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC announced it would “renew its investigative efforts” in the DRC. This announcement came in response to the referral made by the government to the ICC in May 2023. In the statement, the ICC prosecutor stressed that the investigation would give “priority focus” to crimes committed in Nord-Kivu province since January 2022, including crimes committed by all actors and not only crimes by particular armed groups.

In November, the Ministry of Justice organized a conference to discuss the future of the judicial system. Authorities were also involved in ongoing discussions about new initiatives to address conflict-related crimes, including the possible establishment of a special court that would look into crimes under international law.

In July, members of the steering committee in charge of the Special Fund for the Distribution of Compensation to Victims of Uganda’s Illegal Activities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were dismissed and replaced following allegations of embezzlement of funds. Legal proceedings were launched against the former members.

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## Associated documents

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### Report on the human rights situation (covering 2024)

[Amnesty Report 2024/25: Zur Lage der Menschenrechte weltweit; Kongo \(Demokratische Republik\)](#) (Periodical Report, German)

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