

**AMNESTY
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UN Human Rights Council
Thirtieth session
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Item 10: Technical assistance and capacity-building

Interactive dialogue on the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the efforts to increase and strengthen its technical assistance programmes and activities aimed at improving the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Mr President,

Amnesty International is concerned by the persistent impunity for crimes under international law, the violations of due process for those arrested in connection with armed conflicts, and attacks on freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly in the lead up to upcoming elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The impunity for past crimes under international law paves the way for ongoing violations and abuses against civilians by armed groups and by the Congolese army. It is among the main factors contributing to the mushrooming of armed groups and persistent serious crimes against civilians in eastern DRC.

The Congolese security services have been carrying out prolonged secret and incommunicado detentions, arbitrary arrests and other ill-treatment of individuals accused of membership in armed groups or collusion with them.

Uncertainty over whether the Constitutional limitation on presidential term limits will be respected has caused unrest and tension in the country. The space for public debate about the upcoming elections has shrunk dramatically.

Politically motivated arrests and detentions have primarily been carried out by the *Agence Nationale de Renseignements*, the national intelligence agency. Persons arrested are often held in secret or prolonged incommunicado detention. These human rights violations target mainly youth activists and individuals speaking out against a third presidential mandate for Joseph Kabila.

Amnesty International urges the Congolese government to immediately and unconditionally release Fred Bauma, Yves Makwambala and all other individuals arbitrarily arrested and detained for the sole reason of exercising their rights to freedoms of assembly and expression. The Congolese government must facilitate public debate, including on the electoral calendar and term limits, to defuse tensions and encourage a peaceful electoral process.

The Human Rights Council should mandate ongoing reporting about the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo and stand ready to act as developments in the situation require.

Thank you Mr President.