



Democratic Republic of the Congo – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 13 March 2017

Information on prison conditions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), particularly in Kasapa Prison. (Update to Q19196 of 18 February 2015).

Information specifically referring to conditions in Kasapa Prison was not found among sources available to the Research and Information Unit.

The 2017 Amnesty International report on the DRC, in a paragraph headed “Prison Conditions”, states:

“Overcrowding, dilapidated infrastructure and under-funding contributed to dire prison conditions. Most of the prison population comprised detainees awaiting trial. Malnutrition, infectious diseases and an absence of appropriate health care led to the deaths of at least 100 prisoners. An estimated 1,000 prisoners escaped.” (Amnesty International (22 February 2017) *Report 2016/17 - Democratic Republic of the Congo*)

The 2016 Freedom House report on the DRC states:

“Prison conditions are life-threatening, and long periods of pretrial detention are common.” (Freedom House (29 June 2016) *Freedom in the World 2016 - Congo, Democratic Republic of (Kinshasa)*)

The 2016 US Department of State country report on the DRC, in a section titled “Prison and Detention Center Conditions”, states:

“Conditions in most prisons throughout the country remained harsh and life threatening due to food shortages, gross overcrowding, and inadequate sanitary conditions and medical care. Even harsher conditions prevailed in small detention centers run by the ANR, RG, or other security forces, which often detained prisoners for lengthy pretrial periods without access to family or legal counsel. Some civil society activists arrested in Kinshasa were reportedly held in an underground cell operated by the RG at a military camp.” (US Department of State (3 March 2017) *2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Democratic Republic of the Congo*, p.4)

In a paragraph headed “Physical Conditions” this section of the report also states:

“Serious threats to life and health were widespread and included violence (particularly rape); food shortages; and inadequate potable water, sanitation, ventilation, temperature control, lighting, and medical care. Because inmates had inadequate supplies of food and little access to water, many relied exclusively on relatives, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and church

groups to bring them sustenance. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) assisted more than 7,900 detainees who were severely malnourished. Authorities generally confined men and women in separate areas but often held juveniles with adults. They rarely separated pretrial detainees from convicted prisoners. Central prison facilities were severely overcrowded, with an estimated occupancy rate of 200 percent of capacity; they also had little ventilation or light, subjecting detainees to extreme heat. For example, Makala Central Prison, constructed in 1958 to house 1,500 prisoners, regularly held as many as 8,000 inmates during the year. The United Nations reported 59 individuals died in detention from starvation or illness nationwide between January and June.

Most prisons were understaffed, undersupplied, and poorly maintained, often allowing escapes. From January to July, the United Nations documented 519 prison escapes. In February alone the United Nations documented 113 cases of prison escapes, mostly in two mass escapes from prisons in Fizi (43 escapees) and Uvira (31 escapees) in South Kivu.

Authorities often arbitrarily beat or tortured detainees.” (ibid, pp.4-5)

A Human Rights Watch report on the imprisonment of former child soldiers states:

“Detention conditions at Angenga have been dire, with limited access to food, clear water, and medical care. Children were detained alongside adults during the day, and were detained in the same cells as the adults until they were transferred by prison officials to a separate block for sleeping at night in late February 2016. Some of the children had been held for more than a year. None of the children had been charged with crimes, or had access to lawyers or their families.

Several weeks after Human Rights Watch’s research into the detention conditions at Angenga prison was published, the government and the UN in a joint mission removed many of the children.” (Human Rights Watch (22 November 2016) *Updated Submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child concerning the Democratic Republic of Congo*)

As requested, a copy of Query Response Q19196 in MS Word format is included with this response.

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

References:

Amnesty International (22 February 2017) *Report 2016/17 - Democratic Republic of the Congo*

<http://www.refworld.org/docid/58b03407a.html>

(Accessed 13 March 2013)

Freedom House (29 June 2016) *Freedom in the World 2016 - Congo, Democratic Republic of (Kinshasa)*
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Human Rights Watch (22 November 2016) *Updated Submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child concerning the Democratic Republic of Congo*
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/11/22/updated-submission-committee-rights-child-concerning-democratic-republic-congo>
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US Department of State (3 March 2017) *2016 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Democratic Republic of the Congo*
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Sources Consulted:

Amnesty International
Electronic Immigration Network
European Country of Origin Information Network
Freedom House
Google
Human Rights Watch
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Lexis Nexis
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
UNHCR Refworld
US Department of State