Information on electoral protests between 19-21 January 2015 including: treatment by armed forces of protestors; protestors being detained

A report released in April 2016 by the United States Department of State commenting on events of 2015 points out that:

“On January 17, political tensions intensified when protests erupted in Kinshasa, Goma, and Bukavu over a push by Kabila’s Presidential Majority for electoral legislation mandating a nationwide census that would have delayed presidential elections past 2016. In Kinshasa thousands of university students, opposition protesters, and others took to the streets, and there were reports of looting in different neighborhoods. Security forces, including the PNC, FARDC, and president’s RG, eventually achieved some control, but it was not until Senate President Leon Kengo wa Dondo’s January 23 public declaration that the Senate would strike the census language from legislation that protests finally ended. The UNJHRO confirmed 10 deaths, while Human Rights Watch reported 38 civilian deaths, five disappearances, and more than 300 arrests during the protests. Additionally, there were numerous reports of opposition members arrested in cities across the country” (United States Department of State (13 April 2016) 2015 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Democratic Republic of the Congo).

The International Crisis Group in January 2015 notes that:

“The reaction of the Kabila government to the protests has been heavy-handed, involving the deployment of riot police and troops, including the Republican Guard. Demonstrators were violently repressed and there are reports of several casualties. Several opposition leaders have been arrested or had their freedom of movement limited” (International Crisis Group (25 January 2015) DRC Protests: The Government’s Election Law Must be Revised – or Withdrawn).

In January 2015 a document produced by Human Rights Watch states:

“The government of the Democratic Republic of Congo has used unlawful and excessive force to crack down on protests since January 19, 2015, Human Rights Watch said today. The demonstrators were protesting proposed changes to the electoral law that many Congolese believed would permit President Joseph Kabila to stay in office beyond his mandated two-term limit. Human Rights Watch confirmed that 36 people, including one police officer, were killed during the demonstrations in Kinshasa, Congo’s capital. Of these, Congo’s security forces fatally shot at least 21 people” (Human Rights Watch (24 January 2015) DR Congo: Deadly Crackdown on Protests).

This document also states that:

“Congolese authorities arbitrarily arrested opposition leaders in an apparent attempt to silence them” (ibid).
A report issued in March 2015 by the United Nations Security Council states:

“The Government promptly deployed riot police and troops, including the Republican Guard, to respond to the protests. Disproportionate force was used in some instances and there were reports of alleged human rights violations committed by the national security forces. MONUSCO documented the killing of at least 20 civilians and the wounding of 64 others by the police and the Republican Guard from 19 to 23 January in Kinshasa and Goma. Figures from the Government and various human rights non-governmental organizations were higher, putting the number of deaths at 27 and 42, respectively. At least 480 individuals across the country, many from the political opposition, were arrested” (United Nations Security Council (10 March 2015) United Nations Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, p.2).

References

Accessed Wednesday 30 August 2017

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre 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.

Sources Consulted

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