

Despite ongoing unrest, DR Congo must press ahead with preparations for credible elections, says UN envoy

Highlighting political tensions and the disintegrating security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Leila Zerrougui, briefing the Security Council for the first time as head of the UN stabilization mission in the country, said significant progress is being made on preparations for upcoming polls.

“While national political attention remains centred on the confidence-building measures and progress in the electoral process, the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has continued to deteriorate,” she told the Council – presenting the latest report of the Secretary-General on the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([MONUSCO](#)).

Noting that this brought increased risks for renewed instability in many parts of the country, and posed serious threats to the civilian population, she stated that the DRC continues to face one of the world’s most serious humanitarian crises.

“There is no other way of saying it – the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is shocking,” she lamented, pointing out that the number of internally displaced persons in need of humanitarian assistance has become the highest in Africa.

Ms. Zerrougui condemned the persistent attacks by armed groups across the country, the recruitment of children, the rape of women and young girls, the burning of houses and the desecration of places of worship.

“It is the responsibility of those that direct and those that perpetrate these attacks to ensure that this unacceptable violence comes to an end,” she said. “And it is our collective responsibility to ensure that those that direct and perpetrate these crimes be held fully responsible for their actions.”

She encouraged the Council to consider how the security situation could be stabilized and the political and electoral process best supported – in line with the 31 December 2016 agreement for a peaceful political transition.

“A failure to generate confidence in the full and faithful implementation of the 31 December agreement will only serve to heighten political tensions, and to fuel the risks of inciting violence for political ends,” she underscored.

She assured the Council that during these times of simmering tensions, the UN Mission remains “steadfast in its commitment to support the Congolese authorities to protect those most vulnerable, and most affected, by acts of

violence.”

Ms. Zerrougui also expressed her concern over the disproportionate use of force by security services during recent demonstrations, saying that the Government should investigate and take appropriate measures. During those protests, which began at the end of last year, nearly two dozen people were reportedly killed, more than a hundred were wounded and some 200 were arrested.

Moreover, she pointed to the need to restore confidence in the political process, including through the release of political prisoners.

The Special Representative also highlighted the progress made in preparing for the presidential and legislative elections in the country and paid homage to the determination of the Congolese people to participate in the political process.