

## DR Congo security forces committed rights violations against protestors in December 2016 – UN probe

1 March 2017 – Defence and security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) used excessive, disproportionate and at times lethal force to prevent and contain demonstrations in December 2016, in violation of international human rights law and standards, a UN report has found.

“Measures should also be taken, at all levels, to ensure that the legitimate exercise of fundamental freedoms by the population will not lead to loss of lives and other serious rights violations,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said today in a news release on the report.

The report is based on the findings of the investigation conducted by the human rights team comprising staff of the UN Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and of the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

According to the report, at least 40 people, including five women and two children, were killed between 15 and 31 December 2016 across several cities of the DRC, among them the capital Kinshasa, as well as Lubumbashi, Boma and Matadi. The victims include 28 individuals who were killed by soldiers of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), six by agents of the Police Nationale Congolaise (PNC) and six during joint PNC and FARDC operations.

The report also revealed that all but two of the victims were killed by live ammunition. During the same period, at least 147 people were injured by State agents, including 14 women and 18 children, and at least 917 individuals, including 30 women and 95 children, were arrested by defence and security forces.

“Such serious incidents are worrisome, particularly in the current context,” said Maman Sambo Sidikou, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative in the DRC, citing the need to create an environment conducive to the holding of peaceful elections.

The lack of accountability for past human rights violations, including those committed during the demonstrations in Kinshasa on 19 and 20 September 2016, may have encouraged a sense of impunity, and defence and security forces to commit further violations in December 2016.

“Once again we see serious human rights violations being committed blatantly and with complete impunity by the security forces, who employed excessive use of force against unarmed demonstrators, in flagrant violation of international human rights law and standards,” said the UN human rights chief, Mr. Zeid.

He urged the Government to bring those responsible for such violations to justice and urgently adopt the law on freedom of peaceful protests and the law on human rights defenders.