

[DR Congo: UN rights office urges probe into use of force against protestors, UN personnel](#)

23 January 2018 – At least six people died and 68 were wounded during weekend demonstrations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) capital, Kinshasa, the United Nations human rights office reported Tuesday, urging the Government to investigate all incidents where security forces may have used excessive force against protestors and UN personnel.

“The rights to freedom of religion, expression and [peaceful assembly](#) must be fully respected, in line with the DRC’s obligations under international law. The authorities must also ensure that UN human rights personnel are able to carry out their essential monitoring work,” Ravina Shamdasani, Spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), told reporters in Geneva.

On Sunday, the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC recorded at least six deaths during demonstrations in the nation’s capital, Kinshasa, with 68 people wounded, 121 people arrested and the firing of tear gas into churches in various parts of the African country.

A UN rights officer trying to conduct human rights monitoring of the demonstrations was kicked and punched by security forces in Kinshasa, while military police also fired tear gas towards at least three UN patrols.

“Violent dispersal of protestors will not resolve the political tensions but will only serve to heighten them,” she said, calling on the authorities to work constructively with political opponents, religious leaders and civil society to ensure that the right of all Congolese to participate in the public affairs of their country is upheld.

Throughout the country, Internet and SMS [text message] services have been suspended since midnight on Saturday, 20 January night, following a similar 48-hour suspension around the 31 December protests.

Tear gas was fired into and around churches in Kinshasa, Goma, Kisangani, Lubumbashi and Bukavu, while heavy deployments of national police and armed forces, were reported in Mbandaka, Beni, Mbuji-Mayi and Butembo, particularly around places of worship.

Sunday’s events followed the killing of nine people and the injuring of at least 98 others during the 31 December 2017 protests.

“Those held responsible for the killings and injuries must be brought to justice without delay,” Ms. Shamdasani said.

The protests have been taking place in the vicinity of churches.

The political agreement at the heart of the demonstrations – facilitated by *Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo* (CENCO) mediators – allowed President Joseph Kabila to stay in power beyond the end of his term and stipulated that peaceful, credible and inclusive elections would be organized in the DRC by the end of December 2017.