

Reported killing of more than 100 people by soldiers in DR Congo could constitute excessive use of force – UN rights arm

14 February 2017 – At least 101 people are reported to have been killed by soldiers in clashes between military forces and members of the Kamuina Nsapu militia in central Democratic Republic of the Congo over the last five days, the United Nations human rights wing has said.

Some 39 individuals among those killed in the violence between 9-13 February were women, caught in the shooting, when Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) soldiers opened fire indiscriminately with machine guns when they saw militia fighters, Liz Throssell, a spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), told the media at the bi-weekly news briefing at the UN Office at Geneva (UNOG), citing information received from several sources.

The militia members were reportedly armed mainly with machetes and spears.

“We are deeply concerned at the reported high number of deaths, which if confirmed would suggest excessive and disproportionate use of force by the soldiers,” said Ms. Throssell, noting that the UN Joint Human Rights Office is seeking to verify the exact number of victims.

Calling on the FARDC soldiers to abide by standards under national law and international human rights law in their responses and urged the military commanders to reinforce this message with their troops, she added:

“In particular to exercise restraint and to use force only when necessary and proportionate to the threat, to minimize damage and injury and to respect and preserve human lives.”

According to OHCHR, this latest violence said to have occurred in and around the town of Tshimbulu in DR Congo’s Kasai Central Province follows atrocities committed by both sides it has documented since August last year, when a customary chief (after whom the Kamuina Nsapu militia is named) was killed by the armed forces.

Calling on the authorities for a full and independent investigation into the latest violence, the UN human rights office offered its support to investigations into other allegations of serious human rights violations and abuses committed in the context of the ongoing conflict in Kasai Central Province by the FARDC and the militia.

“Given the ongoing violence, we also reiterate our call for increased efforts to find durable solutions to conflicts with customary chiefs in Kasai

Central Province, #8221 said Ms. Throssell.