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Subject: Washington Must Not Allow Another Stolen Election in the DRC
Date: Friday, September 22, 2023 1:21:51 PM
Attachments: [UPDATED 2023.09.18 Washington Must Not Allow Another Stolen Election in Congo Foreign Policy.pdf](#)
[202309 DRC-SOCIAL-UNREST-AND-POLITICAL-VIOLENCE-RISKS-RISE-AHEAD-OF-DECEMBER-ELECTION.pdf](#)
[UPDATED Congolese to Congressional black Caucus 3 - Tshisekedi DRC.pdf](#)
[Letter to Secretary of State Blinken Regarding Deteriorating Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo August 8 2023.pdf](#)

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Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.*

Please see the attached letters and articles discussing the rapid deterioration of democracy in the DRC. It is in the vital strategic interests of the United States that the Congolese people are afforded the opportunity for free, fair and inclusive elections, with the following guarantees:

- External audit of the registration roll
- Inclusion of all legitimate candidates (no Tshiani bill prohibiting candidates based upon parent's origins)
- End to the repression of political opposition and legally organized protests
- Truly Independent and Non-aligned National Election Commission and Constitutional Court

Thank you for your continued interest and consideration.

ARGUMENT *An expert's point of view on a current event.*

Washington Must Not Allow Another Stolen Election in Congo

Fear of Chinese influence must not take precedence over protecting democracy.

By **Stephen R. Weissman**, a former staff director of the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Africa. His latest book is *From the Congo to Capitol Hill: A Coming-of-Age Memoir*, and **Anthony Gambino**, the director the USAID mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 2001-04 and was an election observer there in 2006.

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SEPTEMBER 18, 2023, 9:24 AM

Elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the largest and most strategically situated country in sub-Saharan Africa, are scheduled for December. In the all-important presidential contest, the main candidates are expected to be the incumbent, Felix Tshisekedi; former parliamentarian and activist Martin Fayulu, whom most knowledgeable observers consider the real winner of the last election; Moise Katumbi, the former governor of Congo's richest province; and Augustin Matata Ponyo, a former prime minister.

Unfortunately, signs point to troubled elections that will be neither free nor fair. Despite some support for a democratic contest, official Washington's priorities appear to be trending elsewhere: toward building a strong relationship with Congo's current president and competing with China for political influence and control of Congo's multiple strategic minerals, such as cobalt, a key component of electric car batteries.

But this tack fails to reckon with some uncomfortable realities. Tshisekedi came to power through likely fraudulent elections five years ago, as one of us has written about at length in *Foreign Policy*. Congo remains riven by violent armed groups; political persecution of opposition groups, journalists, and even musicians; and massive corruption permeating the state, the vital mining industry, and the logging of the world's second-largest rainforest.

Washington needs to ask whether its priorities conform to its fundamental national interest in Congo, which is to nurture a long-term relationship with a politically stable, effective state, one that can also ensure uninterrupted access to, and protection of, key natural resources for combating climate change. To achieve this, the United States needs to remain true to its democratic values. Only free and fair elections have the potential to produce leaders who will have the political strength to address the country's dysfunctional governance and latent political instability.

Official Washington recognizes the complexities of Congo, but current policies are haunted by unrecognized past errors. Five years ago, Congolese voters turned out massively. The most credible reports indicate that Tshisekedi lost the election to Fayulu by a more than 3-to-1 margin. However, in a secret, shady deal between Tshisekedi and former President Joseph Kabila, Tshisekedi was declared the winner.

Despite the Catholic Church's electoral observation mission, which documented the fraud and key regional African states' initiative to spur inclusive political negotiations, the Trump administration rapidly accepted this deal, seeing it as a way to maintain short-term "stability" in Congo. This destroyed what could have been a viable alternative path toward longer-term stability based on democracy and the resulting improved governance.

U.S. President Joe Biden has frequently proclaimed that strengthening democracy is one of his key priorities in Africa and the world, even making Tshisekedi a partner in his Summit for Democracy initiative. The United States is providing financial assistance for the December election, including observation of the process by the Carter Center and the Catholic and Protestant churches.

Yet the U.S. State Department is not providing sufficient diplomatic support to democratic forces (including the predominant Catholic Church) who are calling for an external audit of the registration roll, nonexclusion of legitimate candidates, and an end to the repression of opposition forces and legally organized protests. Earlier, it remained silent as the government maneuvered to make sure the “Independent” National Election Commission and Constitutional Court were dominated by its likely supporters.

In the absence of a government accountable to its people, there is every reason to believe that the grand corruption that marked the earlier Joseph Kabila regime has continued. Last year, for example, a “strategic advisor” to Tshisekedi was captured on videotape offering mining concessions to foreign investors in return for kickbacks. “If I ask for something, he [the president] gives,” he assured them. Prosecutors sought a three-year sentence, but the advisor was acquitted by a court without explanation.

Furthermore, the Inspectorate General for Finance recently reported that the state paid almost \$800 million in a year—5 percent of its budget—to fictitious employees. The environment minister, like at least five of her predecessors, has made a habit of issuing illegal licenses for logging the rainforest. And despite the well-documented corruption of the Kabila era, his successor has refrained from prosecuting wrongdoers.

The case of Vital Kamerhe, a former top official in Kabila’s government who became Tshisekedi’s chief of staff, seems emblematic of the government’s lassitude toward corruption and its appearance. Amid public outcries over nonperformance in Tshisekedi’s inaugural \$300 million “100 day program” for public construction, Kamerhe was swept up in the subsequent investigations.

He was charged, along with with a Lebanese businessman, with corruptly embezzling around \$50 million designated for prefabricated housing. To this day, it is unknown where all the money ended up. Kamerhe insisted that he was not the sole decision-maker for the contract, but his governmental colleagues disagreed. He claimed to be unaware that his daughter-in-law received a \$100,000 bay view property from the businessman, but multiple witnesses testified that his relatives and close associates were involved in the transaction. Convicted in a public trial, both defendants were sentenced to 20 years in prison with hard labor. After two years, however, they were acquitted by a higher court in an atypically opaque proceeding.

Nine months later, Tshisekedi appointed Kamerhe minister of the economy and deputy prime minister, a transparent pre-election maneuver designed to attract the scandalized politician’s provincial following. So much for the president’s heralded commitment to fighting corruption.

On the security front, the situation remains dire in Eastern Congo. A rebel group, the M23, continues to occupy much of North Kivu province and commit large-scale human rights violations. Congo’s eastern neighbor, Rwanda, provides substantial support to the M23 rebels in order to maintain control over mineral-rich areas of eastern Congo. Moreover, 120-plus other rebel groups have been operating in the country’s east, with near-total impunity.

At the heart of the problem is the ineffective Congolese army, riddled with corruption and human rights abusers, run by warlords and other former militia leaders. Efforts by an East African intervention force and a

In the absence of a government accountable to its people, there is every reason to believe that the grand corruption that marked the earlier Joseph Kabila regime has continued.

U.N. force (MONUSCO) have done nothing to alter the basic situation. Again, lacking democratic legitimacy, Tshisekedi has been unable to summon the political strength to reform the military. Regrettably, the United States and other Western nations have been unwilling to lean effectively on Rwanda and M23 as they did a decade ago.

Washington's increased focus on competition with China, particularly over Congo's abundant critical minerals, is only further muddying the policy waters. Fighting climate change, the Biden administration is understandably concerned about continued access to cobalt for batteries. Most of the world's cobalt is in Congo, mined largely by Chinese concerns.

But a major reason behind China's advance has been Congo's own poor governance. As a 2022 Natural Resources Governance Institute report on cobalt and the DRC observed, "EV [electric vehicle] buyers, battery manufacturers and miners fear the high prices and disrupted supply, as well as human rights abuses, environmental destruction, corruption, and political risk."

These factors helped drive most Western mining companies out of the country. Without improved governance, which cannot develop in the absence of political leaders possessing democratic legitimacy, Western companies are unlikely to return. For similar reasons, U.S. automakers Tesla, General Motors, and Ford are turning to batteries with less or no cobalt.

Washington cannot build better governance and ensure uninterrupted access to resources by turning a blind eye to President Tshisekedi's questionable legitimacy.

A number of Republican House members and Democratic senators in the United States have highlighted, in proposed legislation and a letter to the administration, the alleged danger of China leveraging its "control" of Congolese cobalt to cut off Western supplies for either industry and the military or the "green economy." Such a move is extremely unlikely, if only because of the DRC's dependence on Western markets and financial support.

Asked at a recent congressional hearing about the "current trajectory of the DRC-China relationship," a senior State Department official replied, "My understanding ... is that the United States remains the preferred partner." Significantly, the Biden administration's 2021 analysis of threats to the cobalt supply chain highlighted the DRC's "history of political instability" rather than an improbable Chinese-influenced resource war against the West.

The Biden administration's tendency to draw close to a "friendly" government is a mark of the short-term thinking that has long bedeviled so much of U.S. foreign policy around the world. It misses the greater need to work with committed Congolese citizens to build truly democratic governance that can promote long-term political stability that is consistent with U.S. interests and values.

Washington is in danger of sliding into yet another round of acquiescing to an undemocratic election, with some arguing that this is required to maintain good relations with the current Congolese leader. Policy makers should take heed of the recent military coup in nearby Gabon on the heels of an allegedly fraudulent election.

Consistent with his democratic rhetoric, Biden should make it clear that Washington is focused on the fundamental requirements that truly free and fair elections be held as scheduled, with full observation by impartial national and international observers, as well as results, from each polling station, that are published rapidly and respected by the government.

Washington is in danger of getting it backwards. You cannot build better governance and ensure uninterrupted access to resources by turning a blind eye to President Tshisekedi's questionable legitimacy and its manifold consequences. Only the winner of a genuinely democratic election, whether that be Tshisekedi or someone else, would possess the legitimacy necessary to work with the Congolese people, the United States, and others to resolve Congo's long-standing crisis.

Stephen R. Weissman is a former staff director of the U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Africa. His latest book is *From the Congo to Capitol Hill: A Coming-of-Age Memoir*.

Anthony Gambino directed the USAID mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 2001-04. He was an election observer there in 2006.

To the US Congressional Black Caucus

Nicole Austin-Hillary, President & CEO

Date. Washington DC, September 19, 2023

Re: Stand with Congolese People to condemn the massacre of civilians in Goma masterminded by President Tshisekedi's regime, continuing insecurity in the east of the DR Congo, high corruption and call for a transparent and credible elections in DR Congo.

Dear Honorable Senator and Representatives

We, US Citizens of Congolese origin and Permanent residents of the US are commending you for the 52nd Annual Legislative Conference (ALC). We are requesting that you stand with Congolese citizens by condemning the massacres of civilians in Goma and other parts of the DRC masterminded by Mr. Tshisekedi's regime, continuing insecurity in the east of the DR Congo, high corruption and call for a transparent and credible elections in DR Congo.

We are taking advantage of this opportunity where you invited Mr. Tshisekedi, President of the DR Congo, to speak in the conference entitled "Us-Africa partnership for ensuring a just & equitable energy transition in Africa...", to challenge you on the values of greatness that our country, the United States should promote.

As congressional members of the most powerful country in the world and champions of democracy and human rights, we strongly believe that while working to secure the US Democracy and Protecting Our Freedoms, your organization can play a decisive role in securing democracy, security, human rights and social justice in the DR Congo too. In fact, the development of the DR Congo can be a catalyst for the development of Africa and the wellbeing of the global black community and the world in general. Therefore, we humbly request that the Congressional Black Caucus be mindful to work or invite only leaders who uphold the values of democracy, human rights and social justice.

Honorable Senators and members of the CBC, the suffering of the Congolese has reached inhuman limits and we are now calling for help to end the circle of violence and atrocities due to failed leadership in the DRC. Hope that has vanished to hundreds of millions of people in the Congo.

Mr. Tshisekedi Felix's leadership has been disastrous both on the human rights side and on the management of the country. The last carnage in Goma of August 30, 2023, where his special forces killed more than 100 civilians, the recent killing of honorable Cherubim Okende as well the arrest of journalists are just a few illustrations.

Mr Tshisekedi has also instituted corruption and nepotism as a mode of governance, emptying state coffers while travelling the world and ignoring Congolese people in an impoverished critical situation. He is also selling mineral rights either to his family or to other countries that do not share democratic values.

In violation of the Constitution, all principles of separation of power and in disregard of the national cohesion, Tshisekedi is promoting tribalism by nominating only his closer brothers or clansmen to key positions. Concerning the organization of the elections, Tshisekedi has placed his relatives at CENI, Ministry of interior, of Justice, of finance. The CENI is organizing the most chaotic, non-transparent, least credible and least inclusive electoral process in the DR Congo. This prelude future major rigging and protests that will destabilize the country and the region. The August 8,2023 letter of United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to Secretary of State Blinken regarding the situation in Democratic Republic of the Congo is very clear on this subject. President Tshisekedi has proven that he is not tolerant of any dissenting voice, which he does not hesitate to repress violently or through legal means, whether it be the political opposition, civil society, or union workers.

Given the current situation in the DRC and the failure of President Tshisekedi to bring peace to the region, we are also asking you to call for transparent and credible elections in DR Congo. Today, these Congolese are only aspiring to dignity, to real democracy, through transparent and credible elections in December 2023. This said, Congolese people count on the moral compass and good conscience of the international community to put pressure on the Tshisekedi regime to ensure a transparent electoral process, which he has failed to do so far.

Honorable Members of the black Caucus, it is our belief that helping Congo build strong institutions and bring about responsive leadership is a moral urgency. This moral duty can definitely be very impactful for the economic and social well-being of both African Americans and the global Black community, as well as for our national security, climate, and global security.

Thank you very much for your consideration and may God bless the United States of America

Sincerely,

Member of Congolese Community of the USA



DRC:

SOCIAL UNREST AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE RISKS RISE AHEAD OF DECEMBER ELECTION

On 20 December 2023, the DRC is set to hold national elections amid a worsening security crisis in the east, an escalating dispute with neighbouring Rwanda, and growing accusations of authoritarian tactics by President Félix Tshisekedi's administration. As the election date approaches, the DRC will face growing risks of political violence, protests, and political instability. At the same time, in the likely pursuit of revenues to fund election campaigning, the government has intensified a review of mining contracts, which threatens to dampen international investor sentiment and cut into economic growth forecasts. UAE and Israeli investors will be favoured over Chinese and other existing companies as new trends emerge in the mining sector.

Three months out from the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) next general election, President Félix Tshisekedi is moving forward to secure a second term in office. The president's party – the Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social (UPDS) – recently confirmed his candidature in the vote scheduled for 20 December. Tshisekedi will face a range of high-profile competitors, including the runner up in the 2018 election, Martin Fayulu, as well as the former governor of Katanga Province, Moïse Katumbi, and former prime minister, Augustin Matata Ponyo. Former president Joseph Kabila has thus far not committed to running, although he has continued to indicate his ongoing interest in remaining active in politics. If Tshisekedi's re-election campaign is derailed, his government is more likely to delay the elections on the grounds of mounting insecurity in eastern provinces and growing resistance to the deployment of foreign military personnel.

Meanwhile, the political atmosphere in the country is rapidly worsening amid growing reports of repression by Tshisekedi's administration. According to human rights monitoring organisations, since May the government has increasingly cracked down on the opposition. Authorities have repeatedly banned opposition gatherings, and security forces have used force to disperse opposition protests and rallies. For example, on 23 May the security forces blocked presidential aspirant Moïse Katumbi from entering Kongo-Central province, where he had scheduled a series of meetings and political rallies. Moreover, there have been an increasing number of arrests of opposition leaders, most notably on 30 May, when security forces arrested Katumbi's top advisor, Salomon Idi Kalonda, while he was boarding a flight at Kinshasa's N'djili International Airport. Kalonda has since been charged with colluding with the M23 rebel group.

PANGEA-RISK assesses the pre-election dynamics between Tshisekedi's government and the opposition, and outlines the political, economic, and security outlook for the months ahead.

Political violence outlook worsens

The risk of political violence has intensified considerably in recent months. On 13 July, the spokesman for Katumbi's Ensemble pour la République party, Chérubin Okende, was found dead bearing multiple gunshot wounds in his vehicle in Kinshasa. Okende had previously served as a minister in Tshisekedi's government before defecting to the opposition. Katumbi has denounced the incident as a political assassination, and at least two major journalistic outlets have since reported that they obtained confidential documents from the DRC's intelligence services, the L'Agence nationale de renseignements (ANR), which indicate that the military intelligence personnel were responsible for Okende's killing. While security authorities have denied this, in combination with the recent intensification of repressive tactics, the incident has added to the broader perception that Tshisekedi intends to stay in power using any means available.



OPPOSITION LEADER MOÏSE KATUMBI



PRESIDENT FÉLIX TSHISEKEDI

In this context, the outcome of the election will almost certainly be subject to challenge, particularly given that electoral procedures are already garnering widespread criticism. In June, Fayulu claimed that the voter identification and registration process lacked transparency, and threatened that his Lamuka coalition would boycott the December vote if the process was not redone in a more credible fashion, using an independent external auditor. These criticisms have been echoed by DRC's international partners, including the United States (US) and European Union (EU), who have stated that the audit

of the voter roll had not “fostered the public perception of independent and transparent oversight.” Nonetheless, on 11 July, the electoral authorities, the Commission Electorale Nationale Independante (CENI) rejected the opposition's request. Under these conditions, it will be impossible to deliver a credible election result, driving the risk of post-election civil unrest and political violence.

This outcome will give rise to a heightened risk of a coup, particularly in the event of widespread allegations of election fraud. In late 2022, Tshisekedi accelerated reforms in the upper ranks of the Forces armées de la république démocratique du Congo (FARDC), dismissing many long-serving high-ranking officers and replacing them with younger officers, mostly from his Republican Guard. Tshisekedi has also demonstrated a willingness to selectively target military personnel for misconduct, although corruption remains endemic within the armed forces. For instance, in early September security forces arrested two high-ranking officers in eastern DRC after forces under their command killed 56 people and wounded 75 during a protest in the city of Goma, North Kivu province. Another Tshisekedi term carries the prospect of deepening reforms, further threatening the positions of senior military figures.

A military intervention into politics would very likely trigger widespread unrest, and may prompt a mutiny in some regions, given the high degree of politicisation of the armed forces. In particular, political and security authorities in regions which harbour secessionist sentiments, including Katanga, will be more likely to attempt a regional power-grab. Such an outcome would have substantial implications for foreign commercial operations, in the mining industry in particular.

SOLDIERS ON STREETS OF KINSHASA, DRC



Security situation in eastern DRC set to worsen

The election period is also likely to be marked by increasing armed violence in eastern DRC, as Tshisekedi has attempted to bolster his popularity by ejecting United Nations (UN) peacekeepers from the region. On 19 June, Tshisekedi's government and the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) jointly announced that the mission would withdraw from the country upon the expiry of its mandate in December 2023. MONUSCO is comprised of about 12,800 troops, making it one of the largest peacekeeping missions in the world. Nonetheless, despite this substantial manpower component, the UN mission has been unable to effectively protect the local population against intensifying violence from various armed groups.

This perception has in turn generated a significant degree of resentment, culminating in escalating violent protests calling for MONUSCO's withdrawal. In mid-August, MONUSCO announced that it would begin an "accelerated withdrawal" ahead of the December 2023 deadline. It remains unclear exactly what this will entail, but it is likely that UN forces will begin departing their bases in the restive provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri in the near-term.

Recent months have seen another surge in violence in these areas, despite the presence of a regional military force from the East African Community (EAC). During August, Islamist militants from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) killed over 100 people in attacks on villages in Beni and Irumu territories, in Ituri province. During the same period, rebels from the Cooperative for the Development of the Congo (CODECO) killed over 40 civilians in similar attacks in Djugu, Aru, and Irumu territories of Ituri. In North Kivu province, a ceasefire with the M23 rebel group remains fragile. Following a notable drop in violence after March, reports of fresh armed engagements between the M23 rebels and pro-government forces emerged during June and July. The security gaps left by departing UN forces are likely to be exploited by these groups, leading to a further escalation in violence in these areas.

MONUSCO PEACEKEEPERS IN DRC

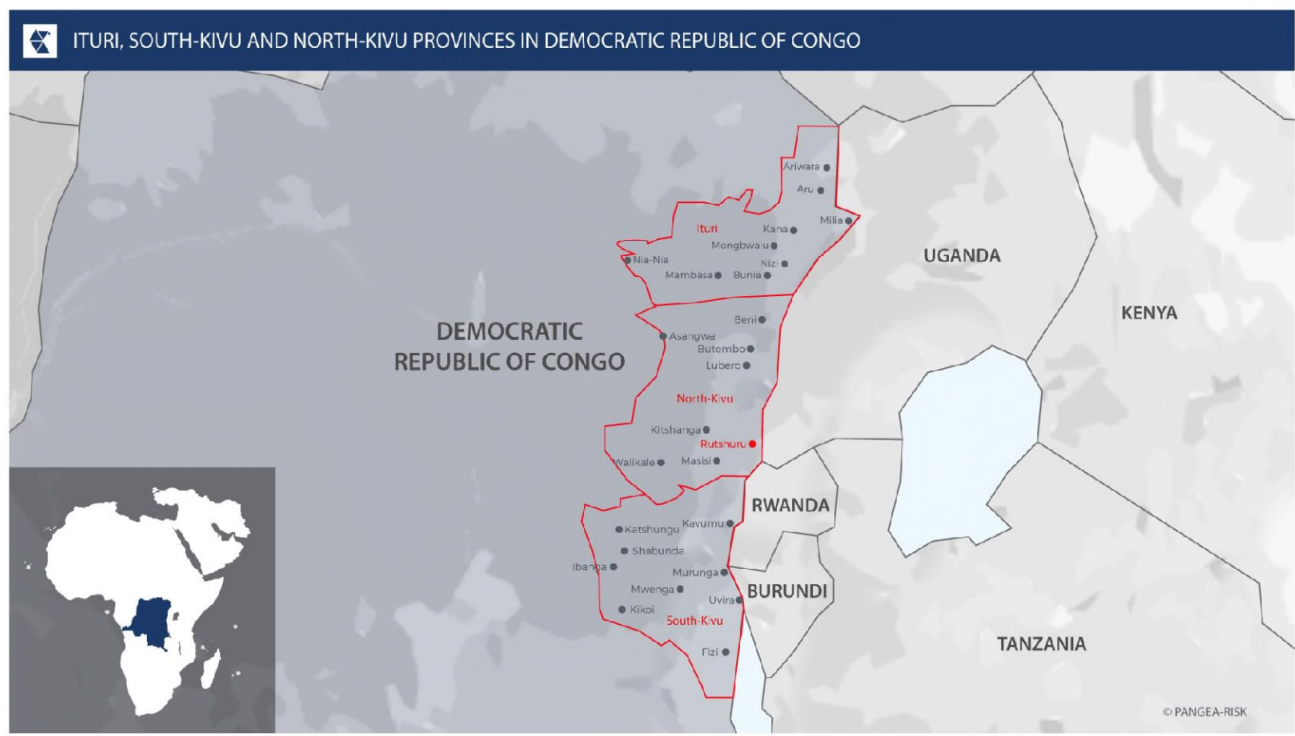


Earlier this month, regional leaders agreed to extend the EAC Regional Force (EACRF) until 8 December at a gathering that was not attended by Tshisekedi. The president initially supported the deployment of the EACRF but has more recently taken a more nationalist and belligerent position, with his critics accusing him of inciting violence against both MONUSCO and the EACRF. Outbreaks of violence in Goma, North Kivu, killed at least 50 people on 9 September when security forces opened fire on protesters demonstrating against the continued presence of foreign military personnel. If his re-election campaign is derailed in coming months, Tshisekedi is more likely to delay the elections until next year on the grounds of mounting insecurity in eastern provinces and growing resistance to the deployment of foreign military personnel.



M23 REBELS IN DRC

In this light, the departure of the UN mission also risks further straining relations between DRC and Rwanda, as the two countries continue to mutually accuse one another of supporting rival rebel movements. At the end of July, DRC officials accused the Rwandan army of attacking Congolese border guards in North Kivu, only days after the UN published a report accusing Rwanda of carrying out repeated military incursions into eastern DRC to assist the M23 rebel group. While a sustained interstate conflict between the two countries remains unlikely, the withdrawal of UN conflict and human rights monitors will remove obstacles to an escalation of the proxy conflict in eastern DRC (see DRC: INSECURITY TO INTENSIFY AHEAD OF DECEMBER ELECTIONS, YET RWANDA WAR RISKS REMAIN LOW).



Economic outlook affected by mining sector contract frustration

The election period has also seen an intensification of contract risks (see DRC: GOVERNMENT SEEKS SWEEPING MINING CONTRACT REVIEW AS ELECTION APPROACHES). On 31 July, DRC's Ministry of Mining suspended the operating permits of 29 local and international mining companies. While no formal reason has been given for the decision, reports indicate that the companies targeted had not adequately addressed requirements relating to the social and environmental impact of their operations. Nonetheless, Tshisekedi's government and state-owned mining firm, Gecamines, have been increasingly attempting to regain control of the mining sector, particularly with regard to minerals essential to the global green-energy shift. For instance, in late August, reports emerged that Gecamines was attempting to buy back copper and cobalt assets operated by Luxembourg-headquartered Eurasian Resources Group, claiming that the company has been too slow in developing them. The affected companies are reportedly attempting to challenge the decision, and are likely to resort to international arbitration, but precedent suggests that any legal process will be prolonged.

While Tshisekedi's administration has given few signals as to its intent in these cases, in light of the proximity to the upcoming election, it remains likely that the government intends to resell the assets under more favourable contractual terms to raise additional campaign funds for Tshisekedi ahead of the December vote. Indeed, there are growing indications that this space will be opened to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), following the signing of a USD 1.9 billion deal in July which will see the DRC and UAE jointly develop four industrial mines in the east of the country. According to Tshisekedi, UAE-based mining firms are looking to move into the cobalt and copper markets, deals which will possibly be accompanied by UAE-funded development programmes and the provision of security force assistance to the FARDC. Similarly, enhanced Israeli investment relations should be expected following the Congolese government's announcement on 21 September that it will move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

COPPER MINING IN DRC



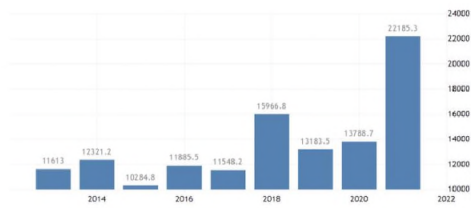


PRESIDENT TSHISEKEDI IN THE UAE

These developments come as the DRC's mining sector faces growing challenges. While global demand for green-energy minerals has risen substantially since 2019, the sector has been increasingly marked by concerns over negative environmental and social impacts of mining operations, especially of cobalt, which accounts for almost 30 percent of the DRC's mineral exports. For instance, on 12 September Amnesty International released a new report documenting how the expansion of cobalt and copper mines in DRC has led to human rights abuses, including forced evictions. Related to this, in addition to Chinese firms, major US and European automotive manufacturers, including Tesla, Ford, Volkswagen, Rivian, and General Motors, are increasingly shifting to embrace and develop battery technologies which exclude the use of cobalt and nickel – such as lithium iron phosphate batteries. If this trend continues, demand for these minerals is likely to fall further in the coming year.

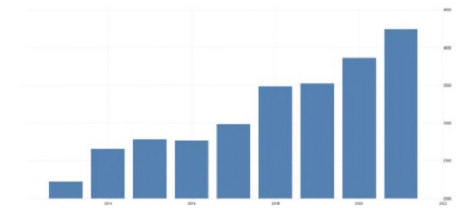
Coupled with growing reservations over evident contract risks, this is likely to further dampen broader investor appetite in the DRC's mining sector, and Tshisekedi's administration will face a narrowing choice of partners. With mineral exports accounting for almost half of government revenues and almost 20 percent of GDP, a downturn in investment into the sector has significant potential to reduce revenues, reduce fiscal stability, and curtail economic growth projections in the coming year.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO - EXPORTS (USD MILLION)



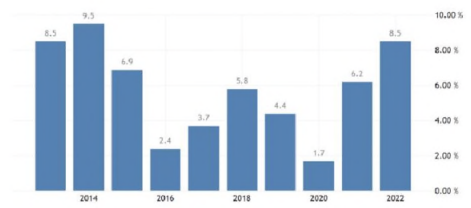
SOURCE: tradingeconomics.com

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO - GDP FROM MINING (CDF MILLION)



SOURCE: tradingeconomics.com

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO - GDP ANNUAL GROWTH RATE



SOURCE: tradingeconomics.com



COUNTRY OUTLOOK

Despite a falling approval rating, President Félix Tshisekedi remains the frontrunner to secure a second term at the December general elections as his government manipulates the vote in his favour. Repression of the political opposition has intensified over 2023, and the conduct of the voter identification and registration process signals a high likelihood of electoral manipulation, reducing the opposition's prospects. The election outcome is likely to be challenged, and there is a heightened risk of post-election civil unrest, political violence, and political instability. Armed violence in the east of the country is likely to escalate as UN peacekeepers withdraw from the region, leaving security gaps, and further driving local resentment towards Tshisekedi's administration. Contract risks have increased, as Tshisekedi's administration intensifies the revision of mining contracts and suspends operating rights for a growing number of local and foreign companies in the sector. Falling foreign investment and reduced demand for mineral exports will reduce revenues and widen the fiscal deficit, although debt risks remain contained.

- **President Félix Tshisekedi** will seek re-election in the December 2023 national elections, competing against several of the DRC's most prominent political leaders, including former Katanga governor Moïse Katumbi, the head of the Lamuka opposition alliance, Martin Fayulu, and potentially even former president, Joseph Kabila. In addition to growing complaints from the opposition regarding the electoral process and composition of DRC's electoral bodies, an increase in reported incidents of repression ahead of the vote indicates a growing risk to political stability. There is a high likelihood that the outcome of the election will be subjected to challenge, particularly in the event of widespread reports of election interference and fraud. This raises the risk of an unconstitutional change of power, with the military increasingly likely to intervene in the event of a disputed outcome and widespread unrest.
- **Increased insecurity** is expected around the December 2023 election, with intensifying repression by Tshisekedi's administration and allegations of electoral fraud likely to trigger incidents of unrest and political violence. In eastern DRC, violence in North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri provinces is likely to escalate as United Nations (UN) peacekeepers withdraw from the region and the multitude of militant and rebel groups in the region seek to exploit emergent security gaps. This risk will also extend to mining assets in the region. The threat of intermittent cross-border skirmishes between the Congolese security forces and Rwandan military will also remain elevated. Local resistance to the extended presence of an East Africa Community (EAC) regional force in eastern DRC will also feed into the risk of unrest.
- **The economic growth** and fiscal stability outlook remain largely positive, with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) having upwardly revised its projections for GDP growth in 2023 to 6.8 percent. Growth will primarily be driven by the extractive sector, which has benefited from increased global demand in recent years facilitating new investments into green-energy minerals. However, this outlook is threatened by the prospect of falling mineral prices amid a surge in global supply, as well as elevated contract risks following a series of operating licence cancellations in the mining sector, which is likely to suppress investor interest. However, despite lower revenues, IMF-supported efforts to rationalise expenditures are expected to narrow the budget deficit, enhancing fiscal stability. Debt-related risks will remain moderated by a low external debt burden and significant buffer room to absorb shocks.

Risk Rating : DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

HIGH

Default High Risk Score		7.80
Normal Average Risk Score		5.06
Weighted Average Risk Score		5.25

Risk Perils Score

Political Instability		4.8
Expropriation, Nationalisation, Confiscation & Deprivation		4.8
Contract Frustration & Breach		5.2
Taxation		5.2
Bribery & Corruption		7.0
Regulatory Burden		6.8
Strikes, Riots & Civil Commotion		4.8
Security		7.8
Sovereign Default		2.0
Economic Volatility		2.2

Risk Rating Scale



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Committee on International Justice and Peace

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WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/JPHD • FAX 202-541-3339

August 8, 2023

Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C. St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I write to express my increased level of concern for the deteriorating situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. You will recall the visit of the CENCO-ECC delegation to Washington in April and my follow up letter to you in mid-May.

I attach for your consideration the latest message from the Congolese Catholic Bishops' Conference (CENCO). I share my Congolese brother bishops' concerns over the long list of government failures to: (1) stem the violence in the eastern DRC generally, (2) ensure an independent audit of the electoral voter lists, and (3) stop the political violence perpetrated against opposition political candidates including some incidents conducted by the President's political party. I am also alarmed over CENCO's report of government repression of opposition demonstrations, restrictions on the freedom of movement of opponents, attempts to pass discriminatory bills, the manipulation of the justice system, and arbitrary arrests. CENCO reminded the Congolese people that Article 64 of the Constitution gives them the right and duty to peacefully defend the integrity of the ballot boxes. This is a clear call to non-violent action to thwart what the Church fears will be a failed election.

In response to CENCO's message, the President of the Republic is reported to have lashed out directly at the Church. I have included this [link](#) to a news report from an American Catholic news service on this event for your consideration.

I urge you to take these warning signs seriously and to act promptly to ensure a free, fair, and credible election. I hope you will work publicly with CENCO-ECC and other civil society organizations to defend the democratic values that our country holds dear. As my Committee stands with the bishops of the DRC, we are ready to work with you towards that goal.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace

CC: Assistant Secretary of State Mary Catherine Phee
Attachments: Message de CENCO le 23 Juin 2023 ; CRUX Article of June 28, 2023



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République Démocratique du Congo

**POUR DES ELECTIONS CREDIBLES
PEUPLE CONGOLAIS, REVEILLE-TOI DE TON SOMMEIL !
(cf. Rm 13, 11)**

**Message de la 60^{ème} Assemblée Plénière de la Conférence Episcopale Nationale
du Congo (CENCO)**

Préambule

1. Nous, Cardinal, Archevêques et Evêques, membres de la Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo (CENCO), avec les autres fidèles de l'Eglise-Famille de Dieu en RD Congo, avons célébré dans la joie et l'enthousiasme, à Lubumbashi du 4 au 11 juin 2023, le 3^{ème} Congrès Eucharistique National autour du thème « *Eucharistie et Famille* ». A l'issue de ce grand événement de la foi, nous nous sommes réunis en Assemblée Plénière Ordinaire du 19 au 22 juin 2023. Mus par la sollicitude à l'égard du Peuple congolais dont nous avons la charge pastorale, nous nous sommes penchés, entre autres, sur la situation socio-pastorale qui prévaut dans notre pays.
2. Il sied de rappeler que « *Depuis son indépendance, le 30 juin 1960, la République Démocratique du Congo est confrontée à des crises politiques récurrentes dont l'une des causes fondamentales est la contestation de la légitimité des Institutions et de leurs animateurs* » (Constitution, Exposé des motifs, §1). Ayant trop souffert et étant victime de tant de guerres à lui imposées, **le Peuple congolais veut la paix, la justice et ainsi travailler au progrès de son pays.**
3. Nous sommes convaincus que la stabilité de notre pays et le bien-être de sa population passent notamment **par des élections libres, inclusives, transparentes, apaisées.** Et ce, à tous les niveaux.

I. CONSTATS

1. Situation sécuritaire

4. Nous apprécions à leur juste valeur les initiatives diplomatiques, politiques et militaires du Gouvernement congolais pour ramener la paix sur toute l'étendue de notre pays. Nous saluons particulièrement la bravoure et le patriotisme de nos Forces Armées, malgré les conditions de travail difficiles.
5. Cependant, la persistance et l'aggravation de l'insécurité, surtout dans la partie Est de notre pays, ainsi que la multiplication des groupes armés nous préoccupent au plus haut point. **Avec la résurgence du M23, soutenu par le Rwanda, une partie du Territoire national échappe au contrôle de nos forces armées depuis plus d'une année.**
6. Dans le même registre, nous assistons, dans la partie Ouest de notre Pays, à l'apparition et à l'extension de la milice Mobondo qui sème la terreur jusqu'aux portes de Kinshasa, la Capitale. A cela s'ajoute, en milieux urbains, l'activisme de la «Brigade Spéciale de l'UDPS, Force du Progrès » (BSU), opérant comme une milice, visiblement entretenue, qui collabore parfois avec la police pour traquer les adversaires politiques et d'autres paisibles citoyens portant un regard critique sur la gouvernance actuelle du pays.
7. Fort malheureusement, nos recommandations relatives à la reconsidération de l'état de siège, la réduction du train de vie des Institutions pour donner plus de moyens à nos Forces armées, et au renforcement de la cohésion nationale, n'ont pas été prises en compte *cf. L'heure est grave. Notre Pays est en danger ! [cf. Néh 2,17). Déclaration de l'Assemblée Plénière extraordinaire de la Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo (CENCO) sur la situation sécuritaire du pays, du 09 novembre 2022, n°8-9].*

2. Le processus électoral

8. A propos du processus électoral, la CENCO reconnaît les efforts du Gouvernement et de la Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI), tant dans la publication du calendrier électoral que dans la constitution du fichier électoral, dans les délais plus brefs que les cycles électoraux passés.
9. Toutefois, ces avancées ne suffisent pas pour l'organisation des élections réellement crédibles, étant donné les **inquiétudes suivantes** :
 - **l'inexistence d'un cadre de concertation tripartite** (Majorité, Opposition, Société Civile), idéal pour clarifier la problématique des Centres d'Inscriptions (CI) qui n'ont pas été retrouvés sur terrain, la question des matériels électoraux sensibles détenus par des personnes non qualifiées, la situation de l'exhaustivité des données des Centre d'Inscription ayant connu des dysfonctionnements.
 - **l'absence d'une contre-expertise crédible** par un organisme international spécialisé pour auditer le fichier électoral.
10. **Le refus par la CENI de répondre favorablement à ces deux pertinentes demandes prouve à suffisance que le processus électoral est mal engagé.**

3. Climat politique tendu

11. Les premiers gestes du Président de la République en 2019 étaient porteurs d'espoir pour un Etat de droit, notamment l'ouverture de l'espace politique et médiatique, la libération des prisonniers politiques et le retour au pays des exilés. **Malheureusement, nous observons aujourd'hui un recul déplorable caractérisé par la répression violente des manifestations de l'Opposition, la restriction de la liberté de mouvement des opposants, des tentatives des projets de lois discriminatoires, l'instrumentalisation de la justice et les arrestations arbitraires.**

12. L'intolérance politique s'observe aussi dans la sphère des fanatiques violents qui s'attaquent au grand jour aux adversaires politiques et à ceux qu'ils accusent d'être proches d'eux. **En témoignent les actes de violence et d'intimidation contre nous, Evêques membres de la CENCO lors de notre visite pastorale à Kasumbalesa, le dimanche 18 juin 2023.**

13. **Nous condamnons toutes ces pratiques inacceptables et rappelons que nous tenons aux élections inclusives.** A ce propos, le Peuple n'acceptera pas un empêchement purement politique de qui que ce soit de se présenter comme candidat aux élections. Il faut lui laisser la liberté de faire le choix de ses dirigeants, conformément à la Constitution.

II. RECOMMANDATIONS

Au Peuple congolais

14. **Les élections nous donnent le pouvoir de renouveler la confiance aux animateurs des Institutions qui ont bien servi le pays, mais aussi de sanctionner tous ceux qui ont mal géré en servant leurs propres intérêts.** Face aux nouveaux candidats, privilégions les critères objectifs de compétence et de probité morale.

15. Prenons donc conscience de notre responsabilité en tant que souverain primaire en disant :

- **Non aux opportunistes qui changent de camps à la recherche des intérêts personnels !**
- **Non à ceux qui prennent comme suppléants les membres de leurs familles !**
- **Non à ceux qui postulent à tous les niveaux !**
- **Non aux tribalistes et aux népotistes !**
- **Non à l'achat de consciences !**

16. Sachons que l'acte que nous allons poser le jour des scrutins est décisif pour l'avenir de notre pays. Compte tenu des expériences malheureuses des cycles passés, **ne quittons pas les Bureaux de vote tant qu'on n'aura pas affiché les résultats.**
17. Avec l'affichage des résultats au niveau des bureaux de vote, nous aurons déjà une idée claire des gagnants. La CENI n'aura d'autres choix que de les confirmer. **Au cas contraire, ce serait une haute trahison et n'attendons pas une autre instance pour nous remettre dans nos droits. Nous avons le pouvoir constitutionnel (cf. Article 64) nous permettant d'imposer pacifiquement la vérité des urnes.**
18. A ce niveau, la contribution de la Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo (CENCO) est d'accompagner ce processus avec une mission d'observation électorale conjointe avec l'Eglise du Christ au Congo (ECC). **Bien entendu, cet accompagnement n'aura de sens que si la CENI donnait un minimum de garantie de transparence. Autrement, nous n'allons pas nous aligner.**

Au Gouvernement

19. Nous demandons de garantir la sécurité des personnes et de leurs biens ; de protéger les frontières nationales, de veiller au respect des droits et libertés de toutes les parties engagées au processus électoral, conformément aux textes légaux.

A la CENI

20. De garantir la transparence des opérations de vote et de dépouillement par le respect des dispositions légales concernant **la cartographie des Centres et Bureaux de vote, l'accréditation des observateurs électoraux, des témoins des partis politiques et des journalistes, la publication des listes électorales**

définitives, la publication des résultats provisoires des scrutins par Bureau de vote.

Aux Cours et Tribunaux

21. Nous exigeons le respect de l'innovation introduite dans la Loi électorale qui dispose que les juges recourent aux procès-verbaux (PV) et fiches des résultats des Bureaux de vote et de dépouillement (BVD), mis à leur disposition par la CENI pour départager les candidats lors d'éventuels contentieux électoraux.

Aux Partis et regroupements politiques

22. Il incombe de préparer correctement leurs témoins et de les déployer dans les BVD afin de ne pas se présenter aux contentieux électoraux avec des résultats sans soubassements.

Conclusion

23. **Pour des élections crédibles, Peuple congolais réveille-toi de ton sommeil !**
Car il est temps que nous choissions nous-mêmes nos dirigeants. Que personne n'achète ni ne corrompe notre conscience. A six mois des échéances électorales, nous nous invitons tous **à la vigilance sur le processus électoral**. Ayant été abusés aux élections de 2018, nous devons en tirer **des enseignements** et nous comporter de façon conséquente pour que désormais, les Institutions à mandats électifs de notre pays soient dirigées par des personnes **réellement élus**.

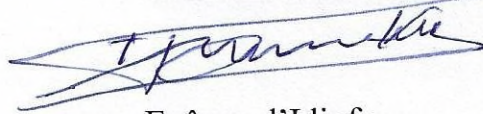
24. Puisse Dieu bénir, par l'intercession de la Vierge Marie, Notre Dame du Congo, et de nos Bienheureux Marie Clémentine Anuarite et Isidore Bakanja, la RD Congo et son Peuple.

Fait à Lubumbashi, le 22 juin 2023.

**LES ARCHEVEQUES ET EVEQUES MEMBRES DE LA CENCO
PRESENTS A LA 60^{EME} ASSEMBLEE PLENIERE DE LA CENCO**

1. S.E. Mgr UTEMBI TAPA Marcel,

Archevêque de Kisangani
Président de la CENCO



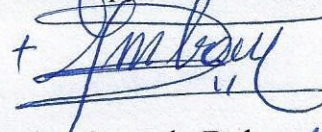
2. S.E. Mgr MOKO José,

Evêque d'Idiofa
Vice-Président de la CENCO
Président de l'ACEAC



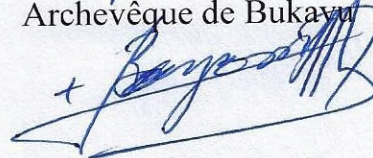
3. S.Em. Cardinal AMBONGO Fridolin,

Archevêque de Kinshasa



4. S.E. Mgr MAROY François-Xavier,

Archevêque de Bukavu



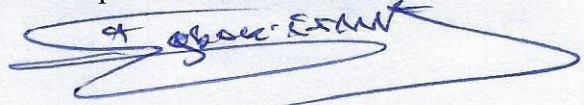
5. S.E. Mgr MUTEBA Fulgence,

Archevêque de Lubumbashi
Administrateur Apost. de Kamina



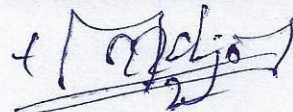
6. S.E. Mgr NGBOKO Ernest,

Archevêque de Mbandaka-Bikoro



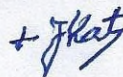
7. S.E. Mgr MOKOBE Joseph,

Evêque de Basankusu



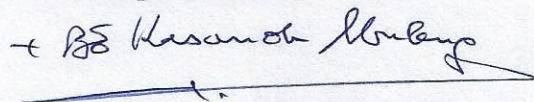
8. S.E. Mgr KATAKA Janvier,

Evêque de Wamba



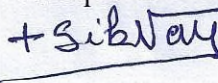
9. S.E. Mgr KASANDA Bernard,

Evêque de Mbuji-Mayi



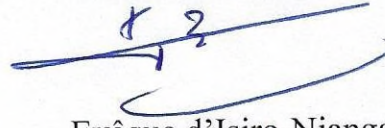
10. S.E. Mgr SIKULI Melchisédech,

Evêque de Butembo-Beni



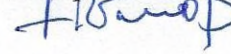
11.S.E. Mgr BULAMATARI Dominique,

Evêque de Molegbe



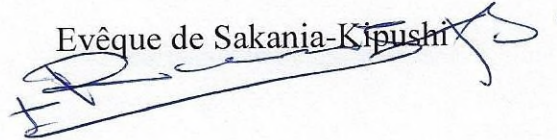
12.S.E. Mgr ANDAVO Julien,

Evêque d'Isiro-Niangara



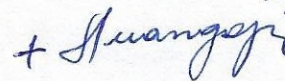
13.S.E. Mgr RUVEZI Gaston,

Evêque de Sakania-Kipushi



14.S.E. Mgr KWANGA Vincent de Paul,

Evêque de Manono



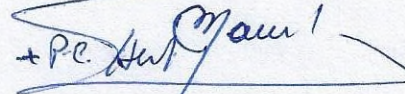
15.S.E. Mgr URINGI Dieudonné,

Evêque de Bunia



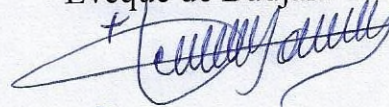
16.S.E. Mgr TSHITOKO Pierre-Célestin,

Evêque de Luebo



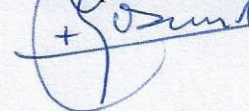
17.S.E. Mgr TEMBO Philibert,

Evêque de Budjala



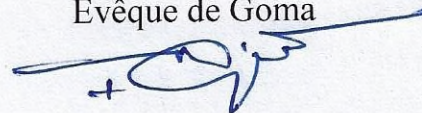
18.S.E. Mgr NGOY Oscar,

Evêque de Kongolo



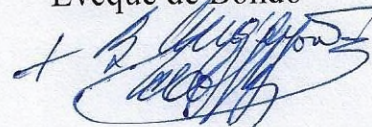
19.S.E. Mgr NGUMBI Willy,

Evêque de Goma



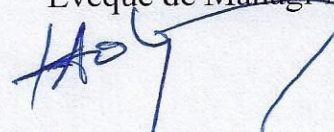
20.S.E. Mgr UNG'EYOWUN Etienne,

Evêque de Bondo



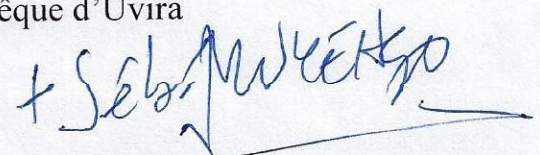
21.S.E. Mgr AYIKULI Sosthène,

Evêque de Mahagi-Nioka



22.S.E. Mgr MUYENGO Sébastien,

Evêque d'Uvira



23.S.E. Mgr BODIKA Timothée,

Evêque de Kikwit

+ Bodica, pss

24.S.E. Mgr MWANAMA Félicien,

Evêque de Luiza

+ Mwanama

25.S.E. Mgr NADONYE Jean-Bertin,

Evêque de Lolo

Admin. Apostolique de Buta

+ Nadonye

26.S.E. Mgr AMADE Jean Christophore,

Evêque de Kalemie-Kirungu

+ Amade

27.S.E. Mgr KWAMBAMBA Jean-Pierre,

Evêque de Kenge

+ Kwambamba

28.S.E. Mgr BAFUIDINSONI Donatien,

Evêque d'Inongo

+ Bafuidinsoni, g.

29.S.E. Mgr KIBAL Emery,

Evêque de Kole

+ Kibal

30.S.E. Mgr MADRAPILE Dieudonné,

Evêque d'Isangi

+ Madrapile

31.S.E. Mgr NKOLO Oscar,

Evêque de Mweka

+ Nkolo

32.S.E. Mgr ILUKU Toussaint,

Evêque de Bokungu-Ikela

+ Iluku

33. S.E. Mgr FANSAKA Bernard Marie,

Evêque de Popokabaka

+ Fansaka

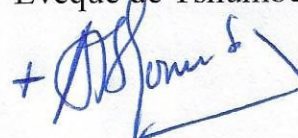
34.S.E. Mgr KIMBENI Jean-Crispin,

Evêque de Kisantu

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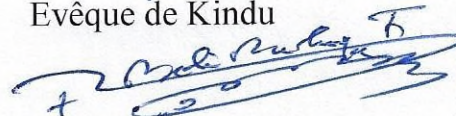
35.S.E. Mgr TSHOMBA Vincent,

Evêque de Tshumbe

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36.S.E. Mgr ABELI François,

Evêque de Kindu

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37.S.E. Mgr LIKOLO José,

Evêque de Lisala

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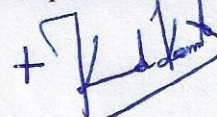
38.S.E. Mgr MBIMBI José-Claude,

Evêque de Boma

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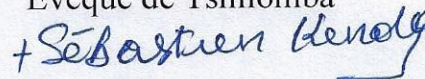
39.S. E. Mgr KAZADI Richard,

Evêque de Kolwezi

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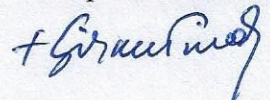
40.S. E. Mgr KENDA Sébastien,

Evêque de Tshilomba

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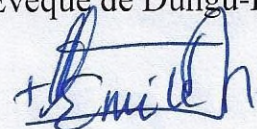
41.S. E. Mgr PINDI André-Giraud,

Evêque de Matadi

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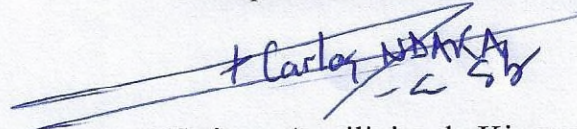
42.S.E. Mgr MUSHOSHO Emile,

Evêque de Dungu-Doruma

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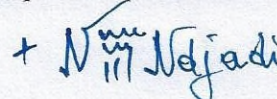
43.S.E. Mgr NDAKA Charles,

Evêque Auxiliaire de Kinshasa

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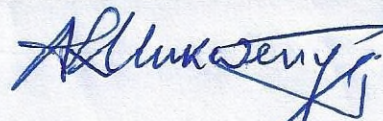
44.S.E. Mgr NDJADI Léonard,

Evêque Auxiliaire de Kisangani

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45. Mgr LENGE Désiré,

Admin. Diocésain de Kilwa-Kasenga

+ 

Congo president and bishops at odds over democracy, electoral reform

By [Ngala Killian Chimtom](#)

Jun 28, 2023

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-africa/2023/06/congo-president-and-bishops-at-odds-over-democracy-electoral-reform>

|Africa Correspondent



President Félix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of Congo. (Credit: Associated Press.)

YAOUNDÉ, Cameroon – Six months away from general elections, a rift between bishops in the Democratic Republic of Congo and President Félix Tshisekedi recently burst into public view with the Congolese leader complaining of a “dangerous drift” in the Catholic Church.

Speaking June 25 in his political stronghold of eastern Kasai in South-central Democratic Republic of Congo, Tshisekedi deplored “a certain drift within the Catholic Church...A drift that I would describe as dangerous, especially in this election year.”

Tshisekedi was on hand to take part in a Mass to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of Bishop Bernard-Emmanuel Kasanda of Mbuji-Mayi.

The DRC is the largest Catholic country in Africa, with nearly 60 million followers representing almost half of the country’s population, and the church has long been an enormously influential social institution.

“The Church must be in the middle of the village, in the middle of the Congolese people. But unfortunately, some of you have taken a dangerous turn that could divide our nation. I feel obliged to say that I will never accept such a drift,” Tshisekedi said.

The son of a three-time Prime Minister under former strongman Mobutu Sese Seko, Tshisekedi pointedly said he would never **“back down in the face of threats or intimidation of any kind. On the other hand, I will attack without hesitation, without remorse, anything that would jeopardize the security and stability of our country.”**

He said he would do that without bothering if he is being criticized for human rights violations or deprivation of freedoms. “I will not budge,” he said, emphatically, and added that he was a democrat who has “no lessons to learn about democracy...I am a democrat, and I will remain a democrat.”

Tshisekedi’s outburst comes as a response to a harsh indictment of his governance and the electoral process by the Congolese bishops, six months ahead of the general elections in the DRC.

During their 60th Plenary Assembly that took place from June 4-22 in Lubumbashi, capital of the Upper-Katanga Province, the bishops offered their starkest criticism yet of Tshisekedi’s government since he came to power in 2019.

The clerics said they were dismayed at the proliferation of armed groups in the east of the country and were even more worried at the resurgence of the M23 armed group which they said is “supported by Rwanda.”

They said part of this region is beyond the control of the regular forces. In the west, the Mobondo militia has emerged and expanded, sowing terror as far as the capital Kinshasa.

The bishops said they were further angered by the emergence of some militia groups in urban areas which terrorize the population and “sometimes collaborate with the police to hunt down political opponents and other peaceful citizens.”

The bishops said that contrary to the “positive signals” Thsisekedi gave at the start of his mandate in terms of a commitment to democracy, there has been “a deplorable setback

characterized by the violent repression of opposition demonstrations, restrictions on the freedom of movement of opponents, attempts to pass discriminatory bills, the manipulation of the justice system and arbitrary arrests.”

They also criticized political fanatics who don't accept opposing views and violently attack those they consider enemies.

These concerns are all the more telling as the country gears up for general elections on December 30, in which Thsisekedi is expected to seek another term.

The bishops' conference has called for significant electoral reforms. It wants the setting up of a tripartite consultation framework comprising the ruling majority, the opposition and civil society. It is also demanding an external audit of the electoral register, failing which it will withdraw from the process.

“If it has nothing to hide, the [Independent Electoral Commission] should not hesitate to carry out this counter-audit, which will not disrupt the deadlines. But if the [commission] and the ECC (Church of Christ in Congo) conclude that we are not in a position to observe elections, then what is being prepared are not elections that we can recommend to the population”, said Bishop Donatien Nshole, secretary for the conference.

The need for reform, the church leaders said, is a response to the country's “recurrent political crises, one of the fundamental causes of which is the contestation of the legitimacy of institutions and their leaders.”

The stability of the Congo and the well-being of its people “depend in particular on free, inclusive, transparent and peaceful elections,” the bishops said.

The bishops called on the Congolese electorate to “rise up” and take responsibility for their future as a sovereign people by participating massively in the elections, because the vote “will be decisive for the future of our country.”

They warned against voting for opportunistic politicians who are only interested in their personal, family or tribe interests, and chose people of high moral standing who have the general interest at heart.