

PRESS RELEASE – 08/02/2024

REACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT TO COMMENTS MADE BY THE SUPREME DEFENCE COUNCIL OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



22 Octobre 2015. Prison Centrale Goma, RDC. © Ben Houdijk / Shutterstock

UPDATE - 12 February 2024: On 9 February 2024, during the Council of Ministers, the Minister of State, Minister of Justice, presented an information note concerning the lifting of the moratorium and asked the government to take note of the request made by the Supreme Defence Council. The signatory organisations deplore this new step supporting this announcement.

In a press release broadcast on 05 February 2024 on the 8 p.m. edition of the national television news programme (RTNC), the Supreme Defence Council asked the Supreme Commander of the FARDC and the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to lift the moratorium on executions of death row prisoners, in force since 2003, particularly those accused of treason at the front.

The signatory organisations of this press release were shocked and dismayed to hear this request read out by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of National Defence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). They condemn the dramatic consequences of a resumption of executions, should this proposal be implemented.

The signatory organisations point out that the application of the death penalty will have no effect on the ground apart from fuelling false and dangerous ideas that the death penalty could help put an end to the war and atrocities in the east of the DRC.

Justice and the re-establishment of the rule of law are essential pillars in the fight against impunity. The resumption of executions would mark a most regrettable step backwards, given the positive efforts made by the Congolese authorities to abolish the death penalty since the introduction of the moratorium in 2003.

Today, more than 800 people sentenced to death are held in Congolese prisons. In 2022, the courts handed down more than 163 death sentences. That same year, the country voted for the first time against the United Nations resolution calling for a universal moratorium on executions.

The fight against impunity in the face of the various episodes of instability in the East remains the authorities' main argument. The President of the Republic has just been re-elected for a second term, while the country is in the grip of serious insecurity and instability. We, the signatories, call for the death penalty not to be instrumentalised by executions designed to create a climate of repression in this new mandate.

This step backwards would also contradict the current trend on the African continent. By 2023, 27 African states had abolished the death penalty in law. In Central Africa, only Cameroon and the DRC have not yet done so.

The signatory organisations appeal to the wisdom of the Supreme Magistrate and President of the Republic, who has made the restoration of the rule of law his hobbyhorse, with the corollary of respect for human rights, the first of which is the right to life, and the fight against impunity, to find a solution to the dysfunction of the judicial system.

Signatory organisations

Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran

ACAT Germany

ACAT Belgium

Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture (ACAT) Burundi

ACAT Cameroon

ACAT Canada

Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture - Congo (Republic of)

ACAT Spain -Catalonia

ACAT - France

ACAT Liberia

ACAT Luxembourg

ACAT Madagascar

ACAT Democratic Republic of the Congo

ACAT Switzerland

Action des chrétiens pour le développement pour les droits de l'homme-RDC (ACDDHO-RDC),

Action Des Femmes Pour La Protection Et La Défense des Vulnérables (AFPDV), DRC

Action pour la justice, la paix et le développement (AJPD), DRC

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)
AFIA MAMA, DRC
Agir ensemble pour les droits humains (AEDH), France
AJC Bomoko, DRC
Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain- ADHRB
Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network (ADPAN), Malaysia
Association africaine pour la défense des droits de l'homme (ASADHO), DRC
Association Marocaine des droits humains, Morocco
Association mauritanienne des droits de l'Homme (AMDH), Mauritania
Avocats sans frontières - France
Barreau de Paris / Paris Bar Association, France
Capital Punishment Justice Project (CPJP), Australia
Centre d'Autopromotion de la Femme et de l'Enfant (CAFEN), DRC
Centre d'éducation et de recherche pour les droits des femmes (CRDF), DRC
Centre d'Observation des Droits de l'Homme et d'Assistance Sociale (CODHAS),
DRC
Children Education Society (CHESO), Tanzania
German Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (GCADP)
Cameroonian Coalition Against the Death Penalty
Colegio de Abogados y Abogadas de Puerto Rico - Puerto Rico Bar Association
Congolese Coalition Against the Death Penalty (CCPM-RDC), DRC
Congolese Coalition Against the Death Penalty, Congo (Republic of)
Center for Prisoner's Rights (CPR), Japan
Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), Switzerland
Moroccan Coalition Against the Death Penalty
Tunisian Coalition Against the Death Penalty
Collectif des organisations des jeunes solidaires RDC-COJKESI, DRC
Free Mumia! French Support Group, France
French National Bar Council
International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)
Culture pour la paix et la Justice (CPJ asbl), DRC
Droits et Paix, Cameroon
Eleos Justice, Monash University, Australia
Together Against the Death Penalty (ECPM), France
International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture
(FIACAT), France
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), France
Fondation FAYETE, RDC
Fondation TALEMBA, RDC
Forum marocain pour la vérité et la justice, Morocco
Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI), Uganda
Groupe Lotus, DRC
Hope Behind Bars Africa, Nigeria
Iran Human Rights (IHRNGO)
Justice Project Pakistan (JPP)
Kenya Human Rights Commission
Kurdistan Human Rights Association
Kurdistan without Genocide
La Ligue des Electeurs, DRC

La Plateforme des Activistes des Droits de l'Homme de Likasi (PADHOLIK), DRC
Legal Awareness Watch Pakistan
Ligue algérienne pour la défense des droits de l'Homme (LADDH), Algeria
Ligue pour la promotion et protection des droits de l'enfant (LIPRODEF), DRC
L'observatoire Marocain des prisons (OMP), Morocco
Ligue des droits de l'Homme (LDH), France
Mouvement Alerte, DRC
Pax Christi Uvira asbl, DRC
Prisoners' Future Foundation (PFF), Zambia
Réseau des Associations de Défense des Droit de l'Homme et des Militants
Abolitionniste de la Peine de mort (RADHOMA), DRC
Cameroonian Network of Lawyers Against the Death Penalty (RACOPEM),
Cameroon
Network of Lawyers Against the Death Penalty (RACPM), DRC
Network of Entrepreneurs Against the Death Penalty (RECPM), Morocco
Rescue Alternatives Liberia
Solidarité Internationale LGBTQI, France
Synergies Coopération, France
The Advocates for Human Rights, USA
Tournons La Page, France
Union Chrétienne pour le progrès et la défense des droits de l'homme- UCPDHO,
RDC
UIA-Institute for the Rule of Law (UIA- IROL)
Witness to Innocence, USA