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# Flash

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## The Democratic Republic of the Congo

# CRISIS IN THE CONGO

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there have been violent clashes since the beginning of the week between the forces of order and demonstrators, including many young people, who are condemning the reform of the electoral law in Kinshasa and the rest of the country.

Reports of the number of victims are contradictory, depending on whether they come from the government or the NGOs: they vary from 11 people killed to over 40.

The archbishop of Kinshasa, Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo has responded to the outbreak of violence, denouncing a besieged capital and especially calling for calm and responsibility.



## Georgine (Delegation Leader) shares with us ...

*Dear Sr. Ana Maria,*

*Yesterday, I phoned Micheline to let you know that there is a lot of tension in the country, especially in Kinshasa and some other towns. There have been killings and looting especially in Kinshasa. We have a meeting of all the Women Major Superiors in Kinshasa from 25 January to 2 February. I left Idiofa to go to Kinshasa but for the moment I am stuck in Kikwit because it is difficult to get to Kinshasa on account of the troubles. The people, especially the students and the opposition, do not want changes to certain articles of the Constitution of the country.*

*We feel united with our people and carry them in our prayer. Please pray for us.*

*We are living through very special times which reflect the calls of our Holy Father in his circular letter to consecrated people on the occasion of the year 2015 and also reflect the calls of our General Chapter which ask us leave our comfort zones and go out to meet the people in the situations they are in. It is a real challenge for us in the Delegation to be with and close to the people so that together we can bring their cry to the Father and struggle with them to bring about this liberation which is so much hoped for and desired. In this struggle we abandon ourselves into the hands of the Lord who freed his people out of the hands of Pharaoh in Egypt. Keep praying for us. Georgine Mufogoto*

**F**rom the beginning of this week – 19-22 January – the big towns of the Democratic Republic of Congo i.e. Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Goma and others, were the scenes of the uprising of the Congolese people caused by the Congolese Opposition.

Why did we have these demonstrations? It seems that, late on Saturday 17 January 2015, the National Assembly of the DRC voted on the modified electoral law in the absence of the Opposition Party. That is why the Opposition called for a mass demonstration on Monday, 19 January 2015 to protest against the planned revision of the electoral law.

According to the Opposition, such a move would permit Mr. Joseph KABILA to remain in power past the end of his mandate (in 2016), although the present Constitution forbids it.

This resistance was unsuccessful because of the lack of objective leadership. So, instead of these demonstrations safeguarding peace and the people's well-being, they gave rise to confrontations between the people and the Congolese police to whom the government had given the task of preventing violent protests by the people.

People were killed (the government put the number of deaths at twelve, a Congolese NGO put it at 28, the FIDH (International Federation of Human Rights Leagues) spoke of 42 while the people say that the number was higher than that, especially among students); there was looting, goods were destroyed, people were arrested arbitrarily and there are still wounded people in hospital while those who cannot afford to be in hospital are at home. Everything was closed down during those three days (19-21) and even now the calm seems fragile.

These violent protests are really an expression of the Congolese people's desire to obstruct the hidden agenda for the revision of the electoral law. This is important if democracy is to succeed in our country. The Congolese are calling for the departure of the incumbent President.

In the face of these clashes, his Eminence, the Cardinal Archbishop of Kinshasa, Laurent MONSENGWO has called on the government to stop killing the people in these words, “We disapprove of and condemn all revision of the electoral law. (This message was given on the third day of the demonstrations.)

We also want to highlight the fact that this protest by the people is being repeated in several towns of the DRC, as we mentioned above, but not yet in the whole province of Bandundu or in the area of Idiofa (where we are). According to some representatives, the fact that the people in these areas are not protesting violently does not mean that they do not agree. On the one hand, the people are restraining themselves in order to protect their assets, the destruction of which would be a backward step in the development process of the people and perpetuate the poverty which eats into all levels of society; on the other hand, they have not yet been incited by influential people to act like the people in other towns.

The Congolese people are willing to pour out their blood because of their never-ending misery. They seek a new lease on life, which will give them back their dignity.

*Today, the Senate met in Kinshasa (Capital of D.R.Congo), and eliminated the article modified by Parliament on Jan. 17, which had been the cause of the violent protests by the Congolese.*

*We are hoping that calm may be restored, and that normal life can continue.*

*Let us continue to pray for the Congo, which for years now, has been ravaged by war, corruption and poverty.*





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