

EurAc Statement

Call for Vigilance in the Face of the Rapid Deterioration of Civic and Democratic Space in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Europe–Central Africa network (EurAc) and its members wish to express their strong concern at the rapid deterioration of the democratic and civic climate in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Indeed, beyond the numerous human rights violations and crimes committed by belligerents in the East, recent weeks have been marked by a surge in violence and repression against civil society, posing serious risks to stability and peace in the country and the region.

On 12 June, while the opposition was organizing a sit-in to denounce the ambitions to amend the constitution carried by the ruling party, the UDPS, law enforcement forces and elements affiliated with the Forces du Progrès violently repressed these peaceful demonstrations. This crackdown left at least 38 injured¹, including four members of the opposition. **EurAc recalls that freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, as guaranteed by the Constitution and international treaties, must be respected under all circumstances, and condemns any form of violence and excessive and disproportionate use of force against citizens exercising this fundamental right.**

This tragedy confirms a trend that the network and its Great Lakes partners have continued to denounce since the last electoral cycle: that of the abuses affecting civic space in the DRC. In North Kivu, the imposition of the state of siege in May 2021 has led to a concentration of powers in the hands of the military, a restriction of fundamental freedoms, a discouragement of civic participation by citizens and civil society organizations (CSOs), as well as the subordination of civilian institutions to military authority. Media outlets, CSOs, and human rights defenders (HRDs) have been targeted or prosecuted under a state of siege that has now been extended more than 95 times, with no genuine oversight from Congolese civilian institutions. In the rest of the country, violations against political opponents, activists, and other civil society actors have also multiplied, including cases of harassment, arrests and detentions on charges of treason, and enforced disappearances.

Nonetheless, the current period marks a worrying turning point, raising fears of a broader crackdown aimed at silencing critical voices once and for all. Our partners are particularly alarmed by the serious abuses attributed to the Forces du Progrès, a youth league affiliated with the ruling party. Some of its members are involved in abuses against civilians, attacks targeting places of worship across the country, the ransacking of party or religious organization offices such as that of the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO), and assaults during demonstrations. We are also concerned by the growing role played by the National Cyberdefense Center (CNC) in arbitrary arrests and detentions targeting political opponents and civil society

¹ Kinshasa: l'ONU fait état d'au moins un mort et 38 blessés lors des manifestations de la C64, Volker Türk salue l'enquête annoncée, Actualité.CD, 19 juin 2026

actors, carried out in secret locations and outside any legal framework². Given the severity of the situation, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights³ has denounced the human rights crisis affecting the country, both in the Eastern occupied territories as well as across the rest of the national territory.

On the international community's side, while the EU's Foreign Affairs spokesperson reacted swiftly⁴ following the events of 12 June, European decision-makers have largely remained passive in the face of the situation. This reticence is difficult to understand and highly concerning for our network and our local civil society partners. The EU and its member states, which traditionally base their external action on respect for fundamental rights and the rule of law, cannot limit themselves to a spectator role. **As all signs point to a marked shrinking of civic and democratic space in the DRC, it is imperative that the EU mobilize all the diplomatic instruments at its disposal to publicly denounce these abuses and call for a de-escalation of the situation.**

In this context, the EurAc network and its members also wish to recall that only an environment respectful of human rights and dissenting voices will allow for the establishment of a genuinely inclusive and peaceful political dialogue, precondition for long-term peace and stability. To this end, it is essential that the EU and its member states actively support initiatives led by CSOs, such as the Pacte Social championed by the CENCO and the Church of the Christ in the Congo (CCC), which aim to achieve peace and harmonious coexistence in the DRC and the Great Lakes region.

This durable peace, however, cannot rest on dialogue alone: it requires that violations of human rights and international humanitarian law be subject to independent investigations, that perpetrators be held accountable, and that victims obtain truth, justice, and reparation. This also calls for a sustained commitment to national, regional, and international justice and accountability mechanisms.

An inclusive and structural approach, grounded in a culture of peace, justice, and respect for human rights, is a winning bet for the durable resolution of conflicts in the DRC and the region. It is up to the EU to choose between silence and unwavering support for Congolese CSO actors, whose work serves the common good of all citizens.

The Europe-Central Africa network

² [RD Congo : Vague de disparitions forcées à Kinshasa](#), HRW, 10 mars 2026

³ [L'ONU préoccupée par la persistance des arrestations arbitraires, des détentions illégales des opposants en RDC](#), Actualite.CD, 30 juin 2026

⁴ [Post X](#), Anouar El Anouni, 14 juin 2026