



# **Building a Better World With Human Rights**

Date: Friday, May 18, 2007

## **DIFFICULT BUT POSSIBLE MISSION IN DR CONGO**

### **FROM MILITARISM TO A 'SHAPED ON SIZE' DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN DRC** (Result of a survey conducted by ICCHRA-DRC in December 2006)

In Democratic Republic of Congo, the dictatorship of Mobutu had got military force as base or foundation. Claims of citizens and politicians have suffered from repression measure handled by armed and police forces for many decades. Groups of pressure allied or associated to armed wings supported from outside the country have conducted insurrections trying to overthrow the dictatorial regime. Rebel administrations settled by the force of weapons could not set up any real democratic systems in zones under their 'respective' control. They have acted with violence perpetrated by armed individual wearing 'official' uniforms or unidentified gangs in alliance with established rulers. By the fact, communities have experienced cycles of militarist management between waves of military expeditions.

There would have been a particularity in DR Congo with the organization of the 'National and Sovereign Conference' that had place during two years (1991-1992),

after the unique political party MPR (Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution) had been weakened and the influence of the presidential majority reduced – these facts had constrained the former president Mobutu to abstain from a part of his prerogatives or imposing and strongly centered power. This missed particularity – the handover of power to the non-armed opposition in a way without bloodshed and through elections – had been interrupted in 1996 by a breakthrough brought in by the AFDL (Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération) whose certain allied groups left the movement in August 1998 with another militarist revolution on behalf of another armed movement called RCD (Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie).

From this stage, many movements believing in the force of weapons have been created and were operational in the eastern part of the country, simultaneously with opposed and resistant militia groups born within local communities to act against those revolution/armed movements. Political talks launched with the facilitation of the international community from 1999 in Lusaka (Zambia) also have looked at the fighting components' claims. These components had already overwhelmed the non-armed political groupings by their number and influence in the country, given that each of them had taken control of a portion of the national territory and been in charge of public affairs "management" in the areas under their "respective" administrations.

The country has passed on from the mubutian militarism to "liberation" or revolution movements' militarism and to finally bring in another democratic process – the one that begun in the 90's had simply been ignored. To get in the arena of power, non-armed political parties and groupings have only opted for the so-named "counter-nature" alliances that have moreover been qualified as circumstantial partnership as seen by certain observers. They did fall in under the banner of AMP (Alliance pour la Majorité Présidentielle) and UN (Union pour la Nation), respectively around former belligerents movements/parties – PPRD of Joseph Kabila Kabange and MLC of Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo.

These former belligerents have shared the “part of the lion” amongst themselves across all the electoral process – using contents of pre-electoral texts that have been elaborated, adopted and applied during the 2003-2006 transition period. Besides, they have put obstacles in front of each other during the same process and this practice ended up with armed clashes in the town of Kinshasa from 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 2006 while the result of the second round of presidential elections was expected to be published.

The other political tendencies – adherent to circumstantial political plate-forms (AMP and UN) created in the awakening of the elections – have put their hands into the “basket full of crabs” in search for a “part of the cake”. This is a whole livelihood tactics as politics is known as a “business of interests”.

So, if one might talk about any democracy in Democratic Republic of Congo at this stage, it should at the same moment be intellectually honest to acknowledge that this democracy has been shaped on the size of militarist belligerents, particularly for the benefit of the former president’s political family and his candidate – PPRD and Joseph Kabila himself.

### **FIDINGS FROM A FACTUAL ANALYSIS CARRIED OUT BY ARTHUM IN JUNE 2005**

(Civil and Political Rights Education: need or emergency in DRC?)

If we consider the course realized by the Congo-Zaire in the past time, if we read the signs of today’s time and the list of all the international agreements ratified by the country, there is no evidence allowing us to confirm that freedom, justice and peace promotion is guaranteed (or that it will be soon). Indeed, we are also assisting at persisting and consecutive attacks on human rights, which, of course, are setting the participation of the citizens back with regard to public affairs decision making.

What kind of intervention would be efficient while other existing forms of discrimination are still to be banished?

- Congolese youth need to be assisted to access education.

- Young people should be taken as "the centre of interest" as they reflect our hope.
- They are our future projection on one side; but on another side, they do represent a fear as well for the whole nation.
- Gaining knowledge would allow the Congolese communities to defend themselves and enjoy their civil and political rights.
- It is from these rights that we can make sure that their social, economic and cultural rights will be progressively respected.

Achieving these steps is the way for Congolese citizens to feel civilly free. It is only, then, that we can objectively talk about democracy in DRC.

Defending and enjoying civil and political rights is an expected achievement that can therefore give to youth a picture of the "country strength in prospect", rather than being its social component that represents fear and incertitude for the future.

We believe that civil and political rights education and other converging forces in terms of human rights promotion and protection can progressively integrate the Congo communities' traditions and this can certainly lead to a culture of freedom that might contribute in human dignity and common welfare for entire generations.

### **NECESSARY ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN NOW SO THAT WE CAN MAKE HUMAN RIGHTS A REALITY IN DRC**

- Take the general situation of "Democratic Republic" of the Congo into consideration;
- Know that some people hope they will get out of diverse scourges they have experienced so far but they also fear that bad moments may be reiterated;
- Put the wider education concept into contribution - that includes both formal and non-formal mechanisms and institutions - and understand that in this process youth play the role of central partner,

- Be inspired with regard to the elements gathered thanks to diverse circumstantial analysis;
- Understand that civil and political rights education is both a need and an emergency for people in DRC;
- Be aware that the democratisation dynamic is still weak and incomplete in terms of respect and implementation of civil and political rights in this particular period that DRC is going through,

Therefore, this year 2007 ICCHRA-DRC made an plan proposal concerning civil and political rights education for the same purpose.

We thought this exercise will be of interest for other institutions that would like to explore specific human rights related issues in DRC. We also hope that they will accept to join forces with us or will just support us to make sure there is enough HR-based contribution for the democratic dynamic or system in perspective. This contribution should be efficient and adapted to the DRC politico-military context realities that made it to be complex both to itself and to neighbour countries.

In conclusion, sustainability must be one of HR interventions' projections. Reporting on punctual human rights violations should now turn up into awareness / education / advocacy / monitoring / piloting / evaluation and reform in terms of professional activities so that bad moments in the country's political history won't be reiterated. DRC would then be part of that Better World expected to be built with Human Rights.

Thank you so much for your attention!

By Dieudonne AMISSI MUTAMBALA  
Researcher & Practitioner in Education,  
Human Rights and Conflict Transformation  
Focal Point of ICCHRA in DRC  
Phone: +243 810343785  
+257 79979121  
E-mail: [drcongo@icchra.org](mailto:drcongo@icchra.org)  
[ddamuta@yahoo.com](mailto:ddamuta@yahoo.com)