

JOHN McCAIN  
ARIZONA

CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

## United States Senate

April 15, 2016

225 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0303  
(202) 224-2235

2201 EAST CAMELBACK ROAD  
SUITE 115  
PHOENIX, AZ 85016  
(602) 952-2410

122 NORTH CORTEZ STREET  
SUITE 108  
PRESCOTT, AZ 86301  
(928) 445-0833

407 WEST CONGRESS STREET  
SUITE 103  
TUCSON, AZ 85701  
(520) 670-6334

TELEPHONE FOR HEARING IMPAIRED  
(602) 952-0170

Ambassador François Balumuene  
Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of the Congo  
1100 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 725  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Ambassador Balumuene,

I write to you to express my deep concern at the increasingly repressive political climate and the deterioration of the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). For the past two years, President Kabila appears to be maneuvering to avoid national elections and consolidate power by undermining the democratic process and closing political space. Such actions run counter to the DRC's international obligations and risk continuing conflict in your country.

Like many leaders in the United States and across the world, I have closely followed developments in your country that warrant concern. Last year, President Kabila introduced an act in Parliament that would allow him to stay in power until a census was completed, which he estimated would take approximately four years. This led to mass protests during which dozens of people were killed by government forces.

Since that time, President Kabila has undertaken a wide scale campaign to crackdown on political dissent and consolidate power. In December 2015, seven senior political figures were expelled from the ruling coalition for signing a letter urging President Joseph Kabila to respect the constitution. Shortly after, six activists were arrested and sentenced to two years in prison after calling for a general strike against the President's actions. These incidents further substantiate reports that Congolese security and intelligence officials have been directed to clamp down on peaceful activists, political leaders, and others who oppose attempts by President Joseph Kabila to stay in power. Human Rights Watch has documented dozens of cases of activists and political party leaders facing arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention. Worse still, reports from credible rights groups indicate that political opponents are now facing death threats from authorities.


Two years ago, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry visited Kinshasa and publicly appealed to President Kabila to respect the country's constitutional prohibition on seeking a third term and to enable the 2016 elections to take place as scheduled. Unfortunately, President Kabila's actions to date have demonstrated contempt for the country's duly constituted law as well as for calls, both internal and from the international community, to abide by it. The steps he has taken to circumvent the constitution, illegally obstruct political opponents, engineer obstacles to scheduled elections, and suppress journalists undermine the rule of law and manifest a clear disregard for the democratic future of the DRC and the well-being of the Congolese people.

Therefore, I urge President Kabila and your government to respect and protect the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and put an end to all forms of intimidation, harassment, and attacks against human rights activists and political opponents. All Congolese political actors should spare no effort, within the framework of the country's constitution, to ensure free and fair elections, preserve peace, deepen democracy, and strengthen rule of law.

The United States values its good relationship with the DRC and is proud to have provided assistance to your government as you continue to confront ongoing challenges. At this time when threats in the region are growing, we cannot afford to endanger our partnership through actions that could undermine the DRC's long-term security and stability. President Kabila has been instrumental to the DRC's path from conflict to relative stability. He now has the opportunity to cement his legacy by setting the country on the successful path towards democracy and prosperity that future generations of Congolese and the world will long celebrate.

It is my hope that the DRC will have its first ever democratic transfer of power this year. To that end, I will work with my colleagues to support the electoral process and continue to strengthen the ties between our two nations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John McCain". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "McCain".

John McCain  
United States Senator