



SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Enabling Environment Snapshot

**Democratic Republic of Congo
(DRC)**

March 2026

Context

Period covered by this report: December 2025 – March 2026

The current political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is marked by a wave of arrests and detentions carried out by the security services, primarily the National Cyber Defence Council (CNC). Most of these detentions and arrests are carried out without due process. People have been detained late at night without the presentation of a judicial warrant or notification of charges, on suspicion of complicity or collusion with the AFC/M23 rebel movement. This was the case for the Permanent Secretary of the People’s Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (arrested during the night of 15–16 December 2025) and the Vice-President of the same party (arrested by the security forces at his home in Kinshasa during the night of Saturday 17–Sunday 18 January 2026).

The political landscape in the DRC is dominated by differences of opinion between the ruling political actors and those in the opposition regarding the holding and merits of an inclusive dialogue to restore peace to the country, as well as the debate on amending the current constitution.

Economically, the population continues to face difficulties in accessing basic necessities, particularly in rural areas.

1. Respect and protection of fundamental freedoms

Although the Constitution of the DRC of 18 February 2006, as amended by Law No. 11/002 of 20 January 2011 revising certain articles, guarantees fundamental freedoms such as freedom of assembly, expression and association, in practice, the exercise of these freedoms remains highly selective and tends to favour civil society actors and political parties close to the government.

On 12 December 2025, [the Governor of Kongo Central Province](#), Mr Grâce Nkuanga Masuangi Bilolo, issued a statement endorsing and reiterating the measures taken by his Deputy Governor to ban public demonstrations in the province. As a reminder, on 19 November 2025, [the Deputy Governor of Kongo Central Province](#), Mr Prospère Ntela Ntambidila, had issued a decision suspending support marches and sit-ins throughout the city of Matadi. According to the provincial authorities, demonstrations are banned throughout the city of Matadi due to logistical problems faced by the Congolese National Police/Kongo Central, which is responsible for ensuring the security of such public demonstrations in accordance with the laws in force, and within the framework of preserving the stability of provincial institutions, and in order to prevent any unrest or any form of political exploitation that could compromise the instructions of the Head of State.

Below are some general examples of violations of the freedom of assembly recorded during the period covered by this snapshot:

- On 11 December 2025, [staff of the Congolese Transport and Ports Company \(SCTP\), formerly ONATRA](#), organised a peaceful march to demand payment of more than 30 months’ back pay and to call for the strict enforcement of a presidential decree ordering the closure of illegal private ports, which they accuse of further undermining their

company. The march began at the Central Station and ended at the Prime Minister's Office. But as soon as the procession reached Boulevard du 30 Juin, [members of the Congolese National Police \(PNC\) used tear gas to disperse the demonstrators](#). Several demonstrators, including elderly officers, were overcome by the gas and found themselves sitting on the ground within the SCTP compound, visibly exhausted. The President of the SCTP inter-union committee, Mr Armand Osase, was arrested.

- On 3 January 2026, in the Businga Territory, North Ubangi Province, teachers' union representatives organised [a public demonstration](#) to protest against the three-month backlog in salary payments; whilst submitting their memorandum alongside their colleagues, they were subjected to brutal repression and arrested by the Congolese National Police. They were released following the intervention of the local political and administrative authorities.
- On 5 January 2026, in Bosondjo, Boso Simba sector, Bongandanga territory, trade unionists from the Congo Cultural Society and workers organised [a peaceful demonstration](#) to demand the implementation of the new minimum wage, which was intended to help them cope with rising food prices. Unfortunately for them, on the orders of Police Colonel Modika, the march was suppressed and the trade unionist Isetshinda was arrested.
- On 4 March 2026, healthcare staff at the Gbadolite General Referral Hospital in North Ubangi Province organised a [sit-in](#) outside Afriland Bank to demand payment of their salaries. The sit-in was broken up by the police using tear gas. Two protesters were seriously injured in the incident. They were Dr Sysco Ngunge, President of the inter-union committee, and the President of the Provincial Youth Council.
- On Monday 23 March 2026, [activists from the citizens' movement Lutte pour le Changement \(LUCHA\)](#) organised [a sit-in](#) outside the regional headquarters of the Société Nationale d'Électricité (SNEL) to [protest](#) against the deterioration in the electricity supply in Matadi, Kongo Central province. These activists particularly deplore the repeated unplanned power cuts and the cost of bills, which they consider exorbitant. LUCHA activists were repressed, brutalised and arrested by members of the Congolese National Police (PNC) during the demonstration outside the provincial headquarters building. They were loaded into a jeep and taken to the urban police station in Matadi. It was thanks to advocacy by the Provincial Network for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders with the Mayor of the City and the Commander of the PNC that the activists were released after several hours in detention.

Although released, and with the aim of defending their violated fundamental rights and combating arbitrary arrests, illegal detentions and the ill-treatment they suffered, a collective complaint was lodged on 24 March 2026 with the Auditor at the Matadi Garrison Military Court against the Operations Officer of the PNC/Matadi, for violation of Article 16 of the Constitution, which states: 'The human person is sacred. The State has a duty to respect and protect it. Every person has the right to life, physical integrity and the free development of their personality in accordance with the law and public order... No one shall be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.'

In addition to the cases of repression of public demonstrations mentioned above, the exercise of freedom of the press, of information and broadcasting via radio and television, the written press or any other means of communication remains problematic. Here are some instances of questioning or arrest recorded in this regard:

- On 11 December 2025, [Mr Anicet Moleka, a journalist with Top Lisala radio](#), co-hosted a programme with a journalist from Mwana Mboka radio. Their guests were Mr Eric Bumba and Mr Shiko. During the programme, they analysed the dysfunction of the Provincial Assembly. Dissatisfied with the content of the programme, on the orders of

- the Provincial Minister of the Interior, Mr Baudouin Yenga Malembe, the two journalists and a guest on the programme are now facing legal proceedings.
- On 11 December 2025, [Mr Patrick Nzonguma](#), a journalist with La Voix de la Mongala radio; Mr Jonathan Yandime, a cameraman with Mongala Radio and Television; and Mr Eric Ngunde, a journalist with Radio Liberté, were arrested and then escorted to a detention cell on the orders of the provincial governor, acting on the instructions of the Military Prosecutor. Their arrest took place as they were returning from an assignment in the Bongandanga territory to cover a political event. Upon reaching Lisala port, they were surrounded by members of the Military Prosecutor's Office. The reason for their arrest was that they had encouraged the public to speak out against the provincial governor's poor governance.
 - On 15 December 2025, [the Higher Council for Audiovisual and Communication \(CSAC\)](#) imposed a ban on [Mr John Kabamba](#), a journalist and presenter of the programme "Le peuple parle", effective from the publication of the order, from appearing on all media operating in the DRC for a period of 90 days. In the same decision, the CSAC formally prohibited programme directors of all media outlets in the country from receiving John Kabamba in any form whatsoever for the duration of the ban. He is accused of having allowed his guest, Mr Daniel Nsafu, to make live allegations deemed damaging against several public authorities in the DRC.
 - [Mr Christian Lusakweno](#), Director of Top Congo FM radio, was summoned to appear before the Higher Council for Audiovisual and Communication (CSAC). Originally summoned for 18 December 2025, Mr Christian Lusakweno requested to be heard earlier, on 17 December 2025, accompanied by his lawyers. He is accused of having made remarks deemed disparaging, on Top Congo FM, constituting unsubstantiated accusations and damaging allegations, in violation of the ethical and professional standards governing the practice of journalism in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These remarks were reportedly made during the programme "Le Débat", broadcast on 12 December 2025. During this programme, Christian Lusakweno is reported to have stated, in particular, that "the country is currently being poorly governed". [In the CSAC's view](#), the journalist relayed accusations deemed unsubstantiated and defamatory, in breach of the ethical and professional standards in force within the media sector.
 - On 21 January 2026, in Mongala Province, [Mr Eric Ngunde, an investigative journalist and presenter of the programme "LOKOLE"](#), was arrested along with his guest, Mr Shadrack Kpili, in the middle of the broadcast. The programme involved analysing the current security situation in eastern DRC, whilst calling on the central government to organise an inclusive dialogue with the nation's key stakeholders. Unhappy with the discussion, at around 9.30 pm, the Provincial Minister of the Interior entered the studio where the programme was being broadcast and ordered their arrest.
 - On 12 February 2026, journalists Moïse Mvumbi, Christelle Makengo and André Matombe, from Radio-Télé Bula Matadi and Radio Télé Zola respectively, were arrested on the orders of the President of the Provincial Assembly for making comments – without naming names – about the behaviour of a parliamentary official who was alleged to have impregnated his press officer. Irritated by these comments and feeling concerned, the President of the Assembly used his influence regarding a complaint lodged by his press officer, accusing them of defamation, and the three journalists were arrested and detained for seven days in prison. They were released on 17 February 2026, following a request for provisional release submitted to the judges of the Matadi Magistrates' Court by their legal advisers.
 - On 13 February 2026, [journalists Kadhafi Ntikala and Joël Kayembe](#), from Bomoko Média and Liberté radio stations respectively, were barred from entering the premises of the Equateur Provincial Assembly by the President of that institution. The President accuses them of providing biased media coverage in order to gather information which they will use to incite the population to revolt against the provincial authorities.

Finally, in order to consolidate public governance and strengthen oversight and sanction mechanisms to put an end to the slowness of proceedings and the lack of specialisation that had limited the impact of prosecutions in this area, [an Economic and Financial Criminal Court, abbreviated to 'TPEF'](#), was established [on 14 March 2026 by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#). This specialised court is tasked [with strengthening the fight against economic crime, in particular corruption, embezzlement of public funds, illicit enrichment and money laundering](#). It is established in accordance with Article 149, paragraph 6 of the Constitution, within the judicial system. It is a court specialising in the prosecution of economic and financial crimes, and the authorities have made their intention clear: to strengthen the fight against corruption, illicit enrichment and the misappropriation of public funds. Through this structure, the DRC aims to step up the prosecution of financial crimes; the authorities seek to protect public resources, improve the credibility of institutions and reassure investors. With this new court, the Congolese state intends to speed up the processing of cases and ensure a judicial response better suited to the realities of financial crime. However, this court could pose a latent threat to CSOs in that it could later be used against certain CSOs critical of the government under the pretext of money laundering or capital laundering.

2. Supportive legal and regulatory framework

Freedom of association in the DRC is governed by the Constitution of 18 February 2006, as amended by Law No. 11/002 of 20 January 2011, revising certain articles (Article 37) and [Organic Law No. 004/2001 of 20 July 2001](#), laying down provisions applicable to non-profit associations (ASBLs) and public utility institutions. The legal framework remains unchanged since [the last snapshot](#) to which we refer.

3. Accessible and sustainable resources

In the DRC, there is no specific law defining the conditions for access to financial resources. Only administrative requirements apply, namely the Articles of Association, legal personality, F92, and the Manual of Financial Procedures and Management. For further information, see the first [report](#).

4. Open and responsive state

During the period under review, an activity was organised in partnership with public stakeholders.

With a view to organising advocacy initiatives at both national and international levels, with the aim of contributing to the fight against impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Government of the DRC, through [the Minister for Human Rights, Mr Samuel Mbemba](#), [organised a workshop at the Nganda Catholic Centre in the commune of Kintambo from 29 January to 7 February 2026](#) to assess and draft the annual report on human rights violations recorded in the cities of Goma, Bukavu and their surrounding areas. In addition to public authorities, namely experts from the Ministry of Human Rights, the Deputy Minister of the Interior and the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH), civil

society actors engaged in the defence and promotion of fundamental rights in the DRC were invited to contribute their expertise in this area.

5. Supportive public culture and discourses on civil society

Although the Constitution recognises citizens' right to express themselves through public demonstrations, in some provinces the provincial authorities do not facilitate CSOs' ability to express themselves freely. This is the case in Kongo-Central Province, where the Provincial Governor has suspended, until further notice, the organisation of marches and sit-ins throughout the province on the grounds that the country is under threat and that all attention must now be focused on the situation in the East (letter No. 090/BIS/CAB.GOUV/KC/01873 of 12 December 2025 and official message No. 090/BIS/CAB.GOUV/KC/1623/2025)

6. Access to a secure digital environment

As part of the implementation of the DRC's Digital Code, in order to strengthen regulation of the sector whilst ensuring a clear legal environment for operators, the Minister for the Digital Economy, Augustin Kibassa Maliba, signed [a ministerial decree](#) on 11 March 2026 setting out the conditions and procedures for examining applications and issuing authorisations for digital activities and services in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

This decree applies to both Congolese and foreign companies wishing to offer digital services within the country. The decree specifies the activities subject to prior authorisation. These include, amongst others, data centres, digital trust services (electronic signatures, certification, time-stamping), application hosting, as well as major digital platforms such as the Cloud, social media, marketplaces, fintech and search engines. Essential digital services, deemed critical to the functioning of the state and the economy, are also covered.

This decree will come into force on 1 July 2026. Among the criticisms levelled at it, two aspects stand out: the first is that excessive formalism — such as the requirement for a small start-up to provide a three-year business plan — [risks](#) excluding certain players; and the second is the lack of penalties should the competent authority exceed the deadline for processing the application, which could amount to granting the authority broad discretionary powers. Finally, there are also fears of restrictions on freedom of expression, as these requirements and this broad discretion could be exploited to target or restrict access to certain civil society organisations.

Challenges and opportunities

With the aim of addressing the impunity enjoyed by certain senior officers of the FARDC and the PNC, who are perpetrators of common law offences and human rights violations, a [reform](#) has been undertaken under parliamentary authorisation. Through a [Decree-Law amending the Code of Military Justice](#), the authorities intend to strengthen the effectiveness of the military justice system and remove legal obstacles

that may hinder the processing of cases involving the army's most senior officers, namely generals, and to step up the fight against the much-criticised impunity. This reform represents an opportunity in the fight against impunity.

Indeed, this impunity was once linked to legal constraints which required that a senior officer be tried only by an officer of equal or higher rank. This revealed several limitations, particularly in the handling of cases involving senior army and police officers. This was the situation in the landmark case of the murder of two human rights defenders, namely [Floribert Chebeya and Fidèle Bazana](#), regarding the handling of the legal proceedings in which a general was an accomplice. This case had encountered difficulties in forming a panel of judges that met the legal requirements regarding rank.

These constraints are once again being raised in the context of legal proceedings targeting certain FARDC generals who were recently arrested for criminal offences and referred to the competent courts. Unfortunately, given the current composition of the military courts, none of them can be tried, due to the lack of appropriate qualifications within the current military court.

The reform was presented by the Minister of State, Minister of Justice and Keeper of the Seals, Guillaume NGEFA. It aims to adapt the functioning of the military justice system in a security context marked by persistent violence in the east of the country, as well as to the initiation of legal proceedings involving senior officers of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC). [The decision was taken at the Council of Ministers meeting on 23 January 2026](#), chaired by Prime Minister Judith Suminwa.

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