

DRC Domestic Broadcasting, 20 December, 2010 (12 December– 19 December, 2010)

by Marie Lamensch, MIGS Reporter for the DRC

Note: The International Crisis Group has reported increased localized violence and UN agencies have recorded over 650 rapes on the DRC-Angola border since September as Angola expelled 7,000 Congolese illegal immigrants from the country. The FDLR also killed several civilians in Walikale and FDLR attacks have led to displacements in South Kivu, where the group is fighting the FARDC.

Privately owned media

(Africa No 1 radio, Gabon-based pan-African radio broadcaster, Libreville, 0000 gmt, 12 December 2010, in French)

“Media watchdog says press freedom deteriorating in DR Congo”

- A report of NGO Journalists in Danger states that freedom of the press has deteriorated by 16% in the DRC and might worsen in 2011.
- Dona Mbaya, chairman of the Journalists in Danger NGO, says a cameraman was killed and several journalists have been jailed and others interrogated.
- Eight journalists have been threatened and harassed, and thirteen were victims of administrative, economic or judicial pressures. Others have met obstacles to free movement.
- Mbaya urged President Kabila to ensure the security of journalists and to promulgate the organic bill related to the Higher Council of Audiovisual and Communication passed into law several months ago.

(Radio Candip, community radio broadcasting funded by Belgian NGO, Bunia, 1530 gmt, 13 December, 2010, in French)

- The Head of the UN office in charge of the coordination for the humanitarian affairs in Ituri District called for more involvement from the central government in resolving conflicts in Ituri and Haut Uele districts in order to put an end to the suffering of IDPs in local camps.

(Le Potentiel, privately-owned daily, article dated 13 December, 2010, in French)

“Controverse autour de la liberté de la presse en RDC” by Louis-Paul Eyenga Sana

- Journalist en Danger (JED – Journalists in Danger) believed that freedom of the press is deteriorating in the DRC ahead of the elections. The head of the NGO, Donat Mbaya, called on President Kabila to promulgate the organic bill related to the Higher Council of Audiovisual and Communication in order to protect journalists.
- Lambert Mende Omalanga, Minister of Communication and Media as well as government spokesperson, rejected the allegations made in the report.

- The report claims that 87 journalists have been subjected to various human rights violations, compared to 75 in 2009: a cameraman was killed, 17 journalists jailed, 27 arrested and interrogated, 8 reporters harassed and another 13 have faced administrative, economic or judicial pressures. On a more positive note, no journalist has been reported missing.
- According to Mende, all these cases have got nothing to do with freedom of the press.

(Radio Candip, community radio broadcasting funded by Belgian NGO, Bunia, 1530 gmt, 14 December, 2010, in French)

- The 9th Military Region of the FADRC in Orientale Province announced that its troops and UN peacekeepers launched a military operation called 'Rudia Umbrella' in Haut Uele District. The aim of the operation is to dismantle LRA strongholds in Dungu Territory

(Le Potentiel, privately-owned daily, article dated 15 December, 2010, in French)

“Avec la contribution de l’UNFPA. Les FARDC se dotent d’un Code de conduite” by Yves Kadima

- The FARDC presented its new code of conduct. Three main goals exist: reinforce the DRC’s democratic culture and respect for moral, civic, political and patriotic values; define the mission, duties, rights and obligations of soldiers; ensure that soldiers respect international humanitarian law. One of the main goals is to reduce sexual violence.
- Damas Kabulo, Secretary General of Defense and representative of the Ministry of Defense, said these new legal documents were necessary. Written in a simple style, the code was written for wide dissemination and 10,000 copies have been printed. Yet, Kabulo said more resources were needed in order to ensure wide dissemination, especially since four languages are spoken in the DRC.
- A film on international humanitarian law has also been produced with the Red Cross in order to sensitize soldiers to the Geneva Convention and the Rome Statute.
- Monusco praised the FARDC for the promulgation of the new code of conduct.

(Le Potentiel, privately-owned daily, article dated 16 December, 2010, in French)

“La Monusco déploie 900 Casques bleus pour contrer la LRA” by Louis-Paul Eyenga Sana

- Mamadou Gaye, Monusco’s military spokesman, announced the deployment of 900 new blue helmets in the two Uélé districts, where the LRA is currently threatening security and peace.
- Madnodje Mounoubai, Monusco’s spokesman, said he was worried about the current security situation, arguing that the LRA might be planning new attacks against civilians around Christmas. The two spokesmen said the end of the year usually sees more activity on the part of the LRA. Monusco is therefore working towards improving humanitarian assistance in the north-east.
- Monusco added that a more extensive approach was needed in order to put an end to LRA presence not only in the DRC but in the region as a whole. Monusco welcomed the call

made by the African Union to establish joint regional surveillance mechanisms against the LRA.

- In a report published on Tuesday, 19 NGOs active in Oriental Province denounced the LRA's violent methods and urged the international community to intervene in avoid new massacres before the end of the year.
- According to the HCR, the LRA has killed at least 2.000 people since 2008 and 2.600 have been kidnapped, leading to the displacement of 400.000 civilians.

(Le Potentiel, privately-owned daily, article dated 16 December, 2010, in French)

“L'insécurité au Nord-Kivu. Les FDLR continuent à causer de soucis à la population” by Dovin Ntelolo Diasonga

- In certain areas of North Kivu, populations still live in fear of being attacked. Rutshuru and Masisi territories have seen an increase in activities by the FDLR, said Monusco, as looting and kidnapping have been reported. The FDLR has also faced the FARDC.
- Investigations are currently taking place, particularly concerning on the use of rape and other human rights violations in Kibua-Mpofi.
- In collaboration with the DARC, Monusco has taken special security measures in Bunyampuli and Mpofi in an attempt to put an end to the violence. A new operation is about to be launched (“Usalama wa umma” = protection des populations) in order to reduce the rebels' activities in Luvungi. The aim is also to protect victims and witnesses.
- South Kivu has also faced violence. The FDLR have been very active in Bunyakri, Kalebla and Mwenga.
- In Fizi, the FARDC has been fighting the Mai Mai Yakutumba, leading to population displacement. However, the FARDC has apparently gained the upper hand and people are returning to their homes.
- Concerning the Amani Leo operation, Monusco and the FARDC have launched a joint operation against the FDLR and other armed groups.
- According to the High Commissioner for Refugees, 53 refugees living in Shabunda, Masisi and Kalehe territories have been brought back to the border and about a hundred refugees are currently awaiting repatriation in Bukavu.
- Operation Rudia Umbrella has been launched a few days ago in haut Uèlè, Oriental Province, in order to protect the civilian population. The presence of troops has been increased in several areas and surveillance planes have been flying over the area. Since the launch of the operation, a slight decrease in violence against civilians has been recorded. A similar operation has been launched in Ituri.

(L'Observateur, privately-owned daily, article dated 17 December, 2010, in French)

“La violence ne paie jamais” by Rombaut Ot.

- The incidents which took place in Goma during the arrival of Vital Kamerbe, the President of the UNC (Union pour la nation congolaise), must be strongly condemned as they tarnish to image of the DRC growing democracy.
- Like any politician, Kamerbe is allowed to move freely across the country and express his opinion. An investigation should be launched in order to identify and judge the authors of

the incident. The DRC has known decades of authoritarian rule under Mobutu and some of his close allies still exist. But democracy is now on the rise and any attempts to return to a dictatorship should be repressed. But the aim of the government should be to fight poverty, focus on and gain the trust of the Congolese people, instead of running after the shadow of Mobutu.

(L'Observateur, privately-owned daily, article dated 17 December, 2010, in French)

“De Lusaka où il participe au sommet des Grands Lacs”

- In a speech at the Great Lakes regional summit (CIRGL) in Lusaka, President Joseph Kabila condemned the illegal exploitation of natural resources and welcomed growing efforts towards peace in the Great Lakes region.
- He referred to the Pact signed in 2006, which aimed at reducing the illegal exploitation of natural resources and increase transparency, equality and the right of states to control their own resources. At the time, the participants decided to put in place mechanisms aimed at certifying the exploitation, evaluation and control of natural resources in the region. The goal is to promote and reinforce the development of comprehensive mechanisms aimed at preventing, repress and eradicate illegal exploitation of natural resources in order to consolidate peace.
- Kabila said illegal exploitation is financing armed groups, therefore contributing to instability in the Great Lakes region, including in the DRC. Transparency should be favored so that populations can be the prime beneficiaries of the revenues. Kabila therefore urged all the members of the CIRGL to act.
- The president also reiterated his determination to work towards peace and progress, and to fight the illegal exploitation of natural resource.

(Le Potentiel, privately-owned daily, article dated 17 December, 2010, in French)

“Selon la Monusco. La situation sécuritaire reste agitée dans le Kivu” by Louis-Paul Eyenga Sana

- According to Monusco’s spokesperson, the security situation is still fragile in North and South Kivu as armed groups have remained active. The FDLR has been particularly active in Rutshuru and Masisi. In the night of 9-10 December, an operational basis in Masisi was informed of an imminent attack on a local village. Rapid intervention allowed the prevention another incident.
- Monusco and the FARDC have taken security measures in Bunyampuli and Mpofi, Walikale. An Monusco-FARDC operation named «Usalama wa Umma » will be launched in order to reduce activities by armed groups, particularly rape and other grave human rights situation, which have been widely committed in the Kibua-Mpofi area.

(Le Potentiel, privately-owned daily, article dated 17 December, 2010, in French)

“RDC : l’ONU redoute de nouveaux massacres à l’approche de Noël”

- The UN announced the deployment of 900 troops in northern DRC, Haut Uélé. Monusco and 19 NGOs fear new attacks by the LRA will take place during the Christmas period, a trend that has been observed in 2008 and 2009. The LRA is still operating in the DRC, Southern Sudan and in the east of the Central African Republic.
- Attacks in 2008 and 2009 were particularly violent as LRA soldiers killed their victims with machetes and bludgeons, and kidnapped children in order to recruit them.
- The operation aims at protecting civilians more than anything else and should last until mid-January, a period judged too short by Oxfam.
- Nicolas Vercken, an Oxfam representative, specialized in the LRA, said the operation is welcomed but should be extended. He believed the UN should launch an information and analysis mission on the LRA in order to find out where they are and how they operate.
- The LRA has about 400-500 men, divided into several groups and acting at night. They are extremely mobile and continue to evade military operations conducted by the Ugandan army and supported by the US. The LRA, often defined as an “invisible enemy”, is barely armed and fighting with machetes, sticks, and a few Kalashnikovs. An Oxfam report states that the group had no military or political agenda but simply aimed at killing and looting. Nonetheless, the LRA is capable of killing, kidnapping and terrorizing civilian populations. According to the UN, the group has killed 2.300 people since 2008 and kidnapped 3.000 boys and girls. Many of whom were raped. The rebel group presence also forced 400.000 residents to flee their homes.

(Le Potentiel, privately-owned daily, article dated 18 December, 2010, in French)

“Les agences humanitaires demandent une action internationale contre la LRA” by Peter Martell

- In report published on 16 December, 19 NGOs gave urged the international community to act against the LRA central Africa. Before Christmas two years ago, the LRA launched several attacks in north-eastern DRC and southern Sudan, killing more than 600 people within 3 weeks. Other were kidnapped or displaced. Last year, similar attack took place around the same period and there is fear that the same scenario will be repeated this year
- Actions against the LRA in Uganda had dispersed combatants in neighboring countries. The responsibility should be carried by these governments.
- The main problem is the lack of access and communication. When attacks occur, it can take up to a month before anybody is informed as villages are very isolated. The report says telephone networks should be improved.
- In terms of security, the only troop present on the ground is the FARDC, who are under-paid, fragile and under-trained. Some residents say they are actually the ones protecting the FARDC by letting them stay in their villages.
- Residents have been tempted to set up or use their own militia, such as the Arrow Boys. The governor of Equatoria has actually asked the government of Southern Sudan to arm them so they can defend the population against attacks. But NGOs warn against private armies, arguing that some of them could turn in to violent groups, therefore further destabilizing the region.
- Actions against the LRA are difficult because they are dispersed over a large territory. Most soldiers are themselves victims of a small group of leaders who kidnapped them.

- Many demands have been made to the UN, including better coordination and information sharing between MONUSCO, UNMIS (UN Mission In Sudan) and MINUAD (UN Mission in Darfur), considering their goal is to protect civilian populations.
- Last month, President Obama presented a strategy of LRA disarmament to the US Congress and said action and capacities should be reinforced in order to protect civilians and prosecute those responsible for crimes.
- An Oxfam representative added that the LRA constitutes a regional problem and action should therefore involve various countries. The UN is to renew its actions against the LRA.

(Le Potentiel, privately-owned daily, article dated 18 December, 2010, in French)

“Le spectre d’une attaque LRA hante à nouveau les populations des Uélé” by Louis-Paul Eyenga Sana

- Uélé residents still remember the crimes perpetrated by the LRA in 2008 and 2009.
- In a new report, 19 NGOs are trying to draw international attention to the issue by calling on the national authorities and the international community to act. They should work in coalition with civil society, NGOs and local communities in order to be more effective.
- The deployment of Monusco and FARDC troops in the area come as a response to LRA presence in the zone. NGOs believe only coordinated action will deter and prevent violence.