

KASAÏ AND KASAÏ CENTRAL

MONTHLY REPORT | MAY 2019



Loangatshimo River (Kasai).

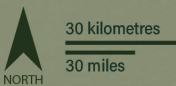
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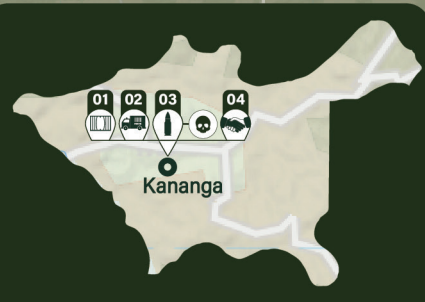
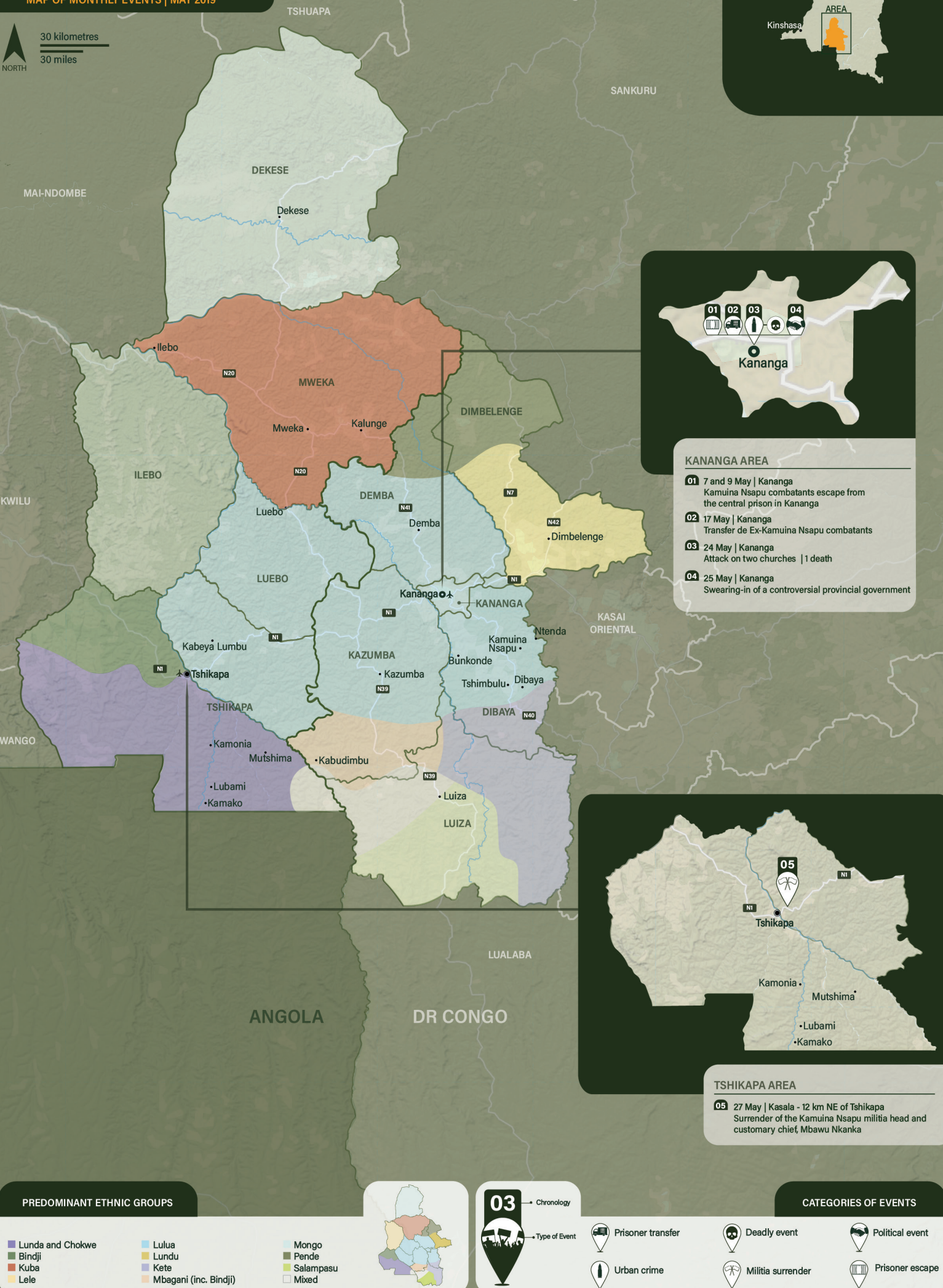
GROUPE D'ÉTUDE
SUR LE CONGO

KASAÏ AND KASAÏ CENTRAL

MAP OF MONTHLY EVENTS | MAY 2019



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO



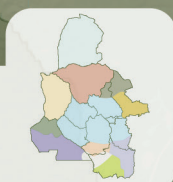
- KANANGA AREA**
- 01** 7 and 9 May | Kananga
Kamuina Nsapu combatants escape from the central prison in Kananga
 - 02** 17 May | Kananga
Transfer de Ex-Kamuina Nsapu combatants
 - 03** 24 May | Kananga
Attack on two churches | 1 death
 - 04** 25 May | Kananga
Swearing-in of a controversial provincial government



- TSHIKAPA AREA**
- 05** 27 May | Kasala - 12 km NE of Tshikapa
Surrender of the Kamuina Nsapu militia head and customary chief, Mbawu Nkanka

PREDOMINANT ETHNIC GROUPS

- Lunda and Chokwe
- Bindji
- Kuba
- Lele
- Lulua
- Lundu
- Kete
- Mbogani (inc. Bindji)
- Mongo
- Pende
- Salampasu
- Mixed



CATEGORIES OF EVENTS

- Prisoner transfer
- Deadly event
- Political event
- Urban crime
- Militia surrender
- Prisoner escape

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Highlights:

- 01** — [Escape of ex-Kamuina Nsapu militia members from the Kananga central prison May 7 and 9, including some implicated in the murder of the UN experts (Kasaï Central)
- 02** — [Transfer of 45 ex-Kamuina Nsapu fighters detained at Kananga Central Prison to Ndolo (Kinshasa) and Angenga (Equateur) prisons on May 17
- 03** — [Increasing urban insecurity in Kananga: attacks on two churches and one death on the night of May 24 (Kasaï Central)
- 04** — [Inauguration of a controversial provincial government in Kananga on May 25 (Kasaï Central)
- 05** — [Surrender of the customary chief Mbawu Nkanka on 27 May, a recalcitrant leader of one of the most feared Kamuina Nsapu militia groups, to the provincial governor of Kasaï in Kasala (12km from Tshikapa)

A. Political and Security Situation in Kasaï and Kasaï Central

The installation of the new provincial governments is now underway. This has stirred controversy, especially in **Kasaï Central**. On May 25, governor Martin Kabuya Mulamba Kabitanga published the list of members of his new government. In the governor's election in December 2017, Kabuya, who was an independent candidate close to the MP at that time, lost to Denis Kambayi (PPRD). He then ran again in 2019 as an independent candidate against Valentin Ngandu of the PPRD, after having been elected provincial and national deputy under the banner of Modeste Bahati Lukwebo's AFDC-A. The publication of the provincial government came after the visit to Kananga by two powerful national MPs from the Lamuka coalition, both members of Moïse Katumbi's "Ensemble pour le Changement" (Together for Change) platform: Delly Sesanga (elected representative from Luiza territory) and Claudel André Lubaya (elected representative from Kananga city). The Sesanga family recently strengthened their political influence over the province through the election of Patrice-Aimé Sesanga, Delly Sesanga's father, as president of the Kasaï Central provincial assembly.¹

Of the eight members of the new government, three are from Lamuka; another is from UDPS but his political party says it did not mandate him to join the government. Vital Kamerhe's UNC also obtained one provincial minister. Most notable is the absence of any member of the PPRD, despite the fact that former president Kabila's party has the highest number of seats in the provincial assembly (11 of 33). The PPRD's reaction the day after the publication of the government was severe. A high-ranking provincial party official described the new government as "clientelist".²

Meanwhile, the security situation in Kananga (**Kasaï Central**) remains worrying. On May 5 and 7, major escapes from the provincial capital's central prison took place. Among the escapees were dozens of ex-members of Kamuina Nsapu militia groups, including five who have been linked to the killing of the UN experts in 2017.³ After the second escape, military reinforcements arrived to secure the prison. Then, on May 17, a group of 45 prisoners was suddenly transferred to two prisons in the western part of the country: Ndolo (Kinshasa) and Angenga (in Mbandaka, Equateur province).⁴ In spite of these transfers, tensions resumed: on May 23, shots were heard in the perimeter of the prison, where prisoners had attacked the offices of the prison managers.⁵

These escapes are part of a significant upsurge of urban insecurity in Kananga, which has manifested itself through an increase in armed robberies.⁶ Here are some examples from the past month: on May 8, the residences of three international UN officials were robbed.⁷ On May 9, armed robbers stole \$2,000 from the home of the deputy rector of Notre Dame du Kasaï University.⁸

On May 24, two churches in Kananga were attacked by gunmen in the Azda neighborhood, near the railway station. One man was killed, and another seriously injured.⁹ This culminated in a demonstration against insecurity in the city by members of the citizen movement “Struggle for Change” (Lutte pour le Changement or Lucha) on May 30.¹⁰ This growth in insecurity is due to the presence of poorly supervised and poorly paid FARDC members, the escapes from the central prison and, crucially, the presence of ex-Kamuina Nsapu militiamen in the city who surrendered after Felix Tshisekedi acceded to power in the presidential election, but who are not being taken care of.

In **Kasaï** province, the surrender of one of the most important customary chiefs and Kamuina Nsapu militia leaders, Simon Mbawu Nkanka, took place on May 27 in Kasala in the Bena Kasala groupement incorporé (Tshikapa city), 12 km from Tshikapa city center. The surrender occurred in front of the provincial authorities, including the new provincial governor, Dieudonné Pieme Tutokot.¹¹ Mbawu Nkanka surrendered with 62 militia members, three children and a woman and with the following weapons: six AK-47s, a Caliber 12 rifle, and a rocket launcher.¹² The governor promised to take care of Mbawu. However, the number of weapons he gave up only represents one-tenth of his arsenal, according to a military source. For the moment, his militia are being housed in Kamalenga, in the south of Tshikapa city.¹³ Mbawu Nkanka was the first customary chief to bring the sacred tshiota fire from Kasaï Central to Kasaï in 2016, in order to create a militia to fight his nephew, Mbawu Mutela. The latter, via his contact with political allies, had managed to start receiving his uncle’s customary chief state salary.¹⁴ Mbawu Nkanka was among the most violent Kamuina Nsapu leaders in Kasaï province: he was implicated in the killing of 17 policemen on 1 December 2016. He and his militiamen also “conquered” the city of Tshikapa for a few hours on 6 December 2016. His surrender could be an important step in consolidating peace in Kasaï, but it is not without its pitfalls (see below).

B. Humanitarian and Human Rights Situation

In October 2018, a large flow of people began to cross the border between the Congo and Angola, at the **Kamako** border post (**Kasaï**). Most of them were Congolese artisanal diamond miners who had been deported from the Angolan province of Lunda Norte. The Angolan government began these deportations in order to further industrialize the diamond mining sector. Since the start of the deportations in October last year, about 500,000 Congolese nationals have crossed the border, including 402,300 between 1 October 2018 and 21 January 2019, according to official sources.¹⁵ Most of these deportations and voluntary returns took place in October and November 2018. However, between 1 January and 14 May 2019, the province of Kasaï recorded 16,713 cases of deportation and 3,484 cases of voluntary return, according to official figures. In this province, the majority of these cases go through Kamako (15,878 of the 16,713 expelled, according to official figures).¹⁶ However, there is reason to be suspicious the official data. In its status report dated February 9, 2019, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) explained that the official number of voluntary returns and expellees provided by the Directorate General of Migration (DGM) “does not include in full 286,706 people reported in various missions awaiting inclusion in official statistics,” including 103,675 returned to the province of **Kasaï Central**.¹⁷

The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) reported 43 serious human rights violations in Kasaï and 19 in Kasaï Central in February 2019.¹⁸ The province of Kasaï is thus third in the Congo, after North Kivu (189) and South Kivu (48). Of these violations, 14 were carried out by Kamuina Nsapu groups, an increase from the 6 violations committed by them in January 2019.

C. Analysis and Recommendations

Political Repositioning

The political situation in **Kasaï Central** and **Kasaï** is in flux following the December 2018 elections, and reflects political dynamics that straddle the national and the provincial. In Kanga, governor Kabuya has hitched his political fate to that of Sesanga and Lubaya despite his ties with the FCC. Although they are part of the Ensemble platform, Sesanga and Lubaya nevertheless supported Felix Tshisekedi in the presidential election rather than Martin Fayulu, who was supported by Ensemble leader Moïse Katumbi. This was for reasons of political expediency, given the popularity of the new head of state in their province. Sesanga already seems to be distancing himself from Katumbi, by opposing the idea of transforming Ensemble into a large political party, although he has promised to remain loyal to him.¹⁹

The stakes in Kasaï Central have another dimension: that of the contested influence of Évariste Boshab, former national minister of the interior, former secretary-general of PPRD and current national deputy from **Mweka (Kasaï)**. Long perceived as former President Kabila's right-hand man in ex-Kasaï Occidental province, he is being contested by various political opponents, including Sesanga and Lubaya, through the influence they apparently had on Governor Kabuya and the composition of the provincial government in Kasaï Central. According to a high-ranking provincial PPRD official, appointing a provincial government without any PPRD members but with several members of Lamuka is part of a settling of scores. According to him, Sesanga is still angry with Boshab for having prevented his father, Patrice-Aimé Sesanga, from becoming governor of Kasaï Occidental in 2010.²⁰ Other sources indicate that Boshab apparently supported the two vice-governors of Kasaï Occidental and current national deputies – Anne-Marie Mbilambangu (Ilebo) and Maker Mwangi (Tshikapa) – against Lubaya when he was governor of the former province between 1999 and 2006. In addition, it is important to note old quarrels between the Lubaphone/Lulua community, to which Lubaya belongs, and other smaller communities (Pende, Kuba, Chokwe, Lele), of which Boshab is a member. These conflicts affected Kasaï Occidental and had led to the creation of the Kasaïan Unity (Unité kasaïenne) province in 1962.²¹

Lubaya and Sesanga are therefore allegedly challenging Boshab's dominance in Kasaï Central, having found a provincial partner in Kabuya, who appears to be seeking a political counterweight to the PPRD. This type of struggle for positioning and control over the home provinces of national politicians had aggravated conflicts and violence in the Kasaï area in 2016 and 2017.²²

Another political phenomenon underway is the repositioning of certain political actors. Two important cases exist: first, the shift by the former president of the Kasaï provincial assembly, François Madila (from Tshikapa) and the former national deputy Pascal Tshitoka (from Luebo) from the PPRD to Vital Kamerhe's UNC, after failing respectively in the provincial and national elections.²³ Madila and Tshitoka are allegedly positioning themselves to regain power after the 2023 elections, by crossing to the other side of the ruling coalition, from FCC to CACH. The second case concerns FCC national deputy Constantin Mbengele, the elected representative from Mweka.²⁴ He is reportedly “divorcing” his sponsor Évariste Boshab.

At the same time, the new governor of Kasaï, Dieudonné Pieme, faces a delicate situation: to succeed, he will have to appoint a government that will satisfy the province's various communities and political leaders. In addition, he will have to manage the expectations of his long-standing political sponsor, Évariste Boshab, who had supported his candidacy for governorship within the FCC. Pieme originates from the same territory as Boshab in the north of the province (**Mweka**), although he has long resided in Tshikapa. Finally, he will have to pay attention to the reaction of the members of the other main political camp in Kasaï, which is pro-Maker Mwangu, once Pieme names his government.

This repositioning risks creating new episodes of violence in the short- and medium- term, as politicians could sponsor militia groups as a means of advancing their agendas. Shortly after the start of the violence in Kasaï in 2016, a logic of instrumentalization of violence emerged, in which in order to stand out as the key person to those in power in the capital one had to both be able to “set fire to his own house” and to put it out.²⁵ In addition, local elections, if they take place as planned in September 2019, could lead to new attempts to instrumentalize armed groups. And finally, the composition of the national government could also lead to further violence.

Security Issues and DDR

The surrender of Mbawu Nkanka could be an important step for peace in **Kasaï**. It is also a political victory for the new governor, Dieudonné Pieme. Indeed, sources in Tshikapa pointed out that Mbawu Nkanka had waited for Pieme's return to the provincial capital before surrendering, hoping to have the guarantee of amnesty and security of the new governor, who would adopt the rhetoric of reconciliation preached by President Tshisekedi.²⁶ However, the leader reportedly has not surrendered with all his fighters, nor all of his weapons. Managing the “post-surrender” period in Mbawu's case will be crucial for consolidating peace long-term.

The greatest short-term challenge for peace in the Kasaï region remains the near-total absence of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs. Already in February 2019, the mismanagement of the surrender of Kamuina Nsapu militiamen in **Kamako (Kasaï)** led the FARDC to kill 19 of them, following abuses they had committed against the population.²⁷ It goes perhaps without saying that the absence of DDR programs for militiamen in Kasaï constitutes a huge risk for peace, as we see elsewhere in the DRC.²⁸ The Implementation Unit of the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Program (UEPNDDR) has been dealing for several years only with combatants who have already demobilized.²⁹ Similarly, despite the various statements by national and provincial authorities, there has not yet been a comprehensive pacification strategy for this region, where at least a dozen armed groups persist.

The case of ex-Kamuina Nsapu militia killed in Kamako in February 2019 demonstrates how fraud linked to humanitarian aid, ethnic tensions, insecurity, a lack of DDR programming and politics can create a harmful mix.³⁰ When the Kamuina Nsapu militiamen surrendered in Kamako earlier this year, the Deputy Territorial Administrator (ATA) there had tried to gather them in Kamako, promising that he would seek assistance to take care of them from the province. The ATA had asked them to stay at the Catholic school after disarming. However, assistance from the province did not arrive; the ex-militiamen began rearming and harassing the population, especially market traders.

At the same time, a certain Honoré Balufu was reportedly defrauding the local population: he had printed tokens marked “Association of Congolese Members (AMEC)/ UNICEF” that he sold for 3,000FC, claiming that obtaining a token would allow the holder to receive humanitarian aid in the amount of \$300. The ATA himself was reportedly involved in this scam through his wife, who was allegedly one of those who sold the chips. When UNICEF heard about this situation, he publicly denounced it on the radio in Kamako.³¹ Balufu was arrested, but he then managed to escape. He moved to his residence in Kamako, and appealed to the Kamuina Nsapu militia members in town to constitute a protection force for him. Balufu allegedly said that the ATA had asked him to look for new recruits, charging them 3,000 francs each, supposedly so that they could benefit from a DDR program.³²

This reorganization of the militia occurred in a context where, since the events of 2017, communal tensions had increased because many members of the Chokwe, Pende, and Tetela communities associated the Kamuina Nsapu militias (composed mainly of Lubaphones) with the Lubaphone community in general.³³ In Kamako, a large number of market traders are from the Tetela community.

Their response to the abuse by the militia was, among other things, to attack Lubaphones. At the same time, the FARDC intervened to try to calm the situation. Whatever his intentions, however, the intervention by the FARDC commander, which eventually killed 19 militiamen, was interpreted by members of the Lubaphone community as ethnically-motivated. The FARDC commander is allegedly from the Mongo community of the former province of Equateur, and therefore related to the Tetela.

The current situation in Kamako is calmer than in February. However, this episode demonstrates how the absence of a DDR program can lead to adverse and sometimes unforeseen consequences for security and ethnic relations. **It is therefore urgent that national and international actors put appropriate DDR programs in place in the Kasaï region, taking into consideration the needs and desires of the different communities, in order to prevent a resumption of conflict and the instrumentalization of active and demobilized combatants.**

ENDNOTES

- 1 [Patrice-Aimé Sesanga has had a long political career. He is a former senator, a former member of the central committee of the Popular Movement for the Revolution \(MPR, the political party of former president Mobutu\), and a national vice-minister.](#)
- 2 <https://www.actualite.cd/2019/05/25/kasai-central-absent-au-gouvernement-provincial-le-pprd-crie-au-clientelisme-et>
- 3 <https://www.radiokapi.net/2019/05/16/actualite/justice/kananga-le-parquet-revele-les-noms-de-nouveaux-evades-lies-au-meurtre-0>
- 4 <https://www.radiokapi.net/2019/05/21/actualite/justice/kasai-45-detenus-de-la-prison-de-kananga-transferees-ndolo-et-angenga>
- 5 <https://www.radiokapi.net/2019/05/24/actualite/securite/kasai-nouvelles-tensions-la-prison-centrale-de-kananga>
- 6 <https://blog.kivusecurity.org/what-is-behind-the-rise-of-crime-in-the-congos-cities/>
- 7 Interview, civil society member, Kasaï Central, May 2019.
- 8 Interview with the victim, Kasaï Central, May 2019.
- 9 <https://actualite.cd/2019/05/25/rdc-un-mort-et-un-blese-grave-dans-lattaque-dune-eglise-kananga>
- 10 <https://www.radiokapi.net/2019/05/31/actualite/securite/kananga-une-marche-de-la-lucha-contre-linsecurite-dans-la-ville>
- 11 https://www.mediacongo.net/article-actualite-51877_kasai_reddition_ce_lundi_du_chef_milicien_mbawu_nkanka.html
- 12 Telephone interview with UN source, May 2019.
- 13 <https://actualite.cd/2019/05/28/kasai-reddition-tshikapa-dun-chef-milicien-implique-dans-le-meurtre-de-17-policiers>
- 14 <http://congoresearchgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Setting-Fire-to-your-Own-House-CRG-FINAL.pdf>
- 15 Interview with humanitarian source, Kasaï, May 2019. The second figure comes from: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/angola_retournes_sitrep06.pdf
- 16 “Summary Table of Deportations and Voluntary Return of Congolese by Angola in 2019 from 1 January to 14/05/19,” provided by humanitarian source, Kasaï, May 2019.
- 17 https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/angola_retournes_sitrep06.pdf, p.2.
- 18 https://monusco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unjhro_-_analysis_of_the_human_rights_situation_in_drc_feb_19_fr_final_0.pdf
- 19 <http://congoresearchgroup.org/retour-de-moise-katumbi-en-rdc-quelles-implications-politiques/>
- 20 <https://www.actualite.cd/2019/05/25/kasai-central-absent-au-gouvernement-provincial-le-pprd-crie-au-clientelisme-et>
- 21 <http://congoresearchgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Setting-Fire-to-your-Own-House-CRG-FINAL.pdf>, pp.35-36.
- 22 <http://congoresearchgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Setting-Fire-to-your-Own-House-CRG-FINAL.pdf>, surtout les pages 22-25.
- 23 Interviews with a civil society member and UN staff member, Kasaï, May 2019.
- 24 Interview with UN staff member, Kasaï, May 2019.
- 25 <http://congoresearchgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Setting-Fire-to-your-Own-House-CRG-FINAL.pdf>, p.26.
- 26 Interviews with two civil society members, Kasaï, May 2019.
- 27 <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190226-rdc-moins-19-miliciens-kamuina-nsapu-tues-kasai-armee>
- 28 See, for example, the recent appeal by the Territorial Administrator of Lubero (North Kivu) for the creation of camps for militia members who wish to disarm: <https://actualite.cd/2019/05/30/lubero-plaidoyer-de-lat-pour-lerection-dun-site-daccueil-des-miliciens-desireux-de>
- 29 <https://uepnldr.cd/>
- 30 This paragraph and the two others that follow it are based on interviews with two civil society members and one UN staff member in Kasaï, May 2019.
- 31 Interview with UN staff member, Kasaï, May 2019.
- 32 Interview with civil society member, Kasaï, May 2019.
- 33 On the interethnic tensions like to the conflict in Kasaï, see: <http://congoresearchgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Setting-Fire-to-your-Own-House-CRG-FINAL.pdf>, pp.17-20. Also see: <https://monusco.unmissions.org/la-monusco-soutient-un-retour-au-calme-%C3%A0-kamako>



Tshikapa airport before the return of governor Dieudonné Pieme.

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