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Prospective presidential opposition candidate Moïse Katumbi tells reporters that he plans to return to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to run for office, despite government threats to arrest him. Opposition figures say confrontation with the government is inevitable, as figures close to president Joseph Kabila (2001-present) argue DRC should hold a referendum to remove term limits. The United Nations (UN) warns that the risk of violence around the delayed election is increasing. The World Bank withdraws a \$73m funding programme for the Grand Inga 3 hydropower project citing strategic differences with the DRC government. Health officials begin a preliminary vaccination programme in Kinshasa and Kwango Province on the Angolan border to prevent the further spread of a yellow fever outbreak that has 1,800 confirmed cases.

Katumbi plans to return as government and opposition ready for confrontation

Prospective presidential opposition candidate **Moïse Katumbi** told reporters on 5 July that he plans to return to the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** to run for office.¹ Opposition parties view Katumbi as their primary hope for defeating incumbent president **Joseph Kabila** (2001-present). Katumbi has been out of the country since May when he was injured during a demonstration; he was treated in **South Africa** and the **United Kingdom (UK)** and is recovering in **Paris, France**.² Government prosecutors convicted Katumbi of an illicit sale of a property in June and the **Lubumbashi High Court** sentenced him to three years in prison (see *ARC Briefing DRC June 2016*). However, a seemingly defiant Katumbi held several media briefings in early July to declare his intent to return:³

*"I'm going to come back even if they have their fake police warrant ... I am a candidate in 2016. My health is improving very well. I'm going back as soon as possible ... I'm not scared about anything."*⁴

However, allies of the president were quick to downplay the statement. Government spokesperson **Lambert Mende** said that Katumbi was attempting to "*distract the population*".⁵ Justice minister **Alexis Thambwe Mwamba** told the media on 25 July that Katumbi would be arrested immediately on his return.⁶

*"If Mr Katumbi returns to DRC, he will be sent to prison, that is the law."*⁷

However, Katumbi's widespread popularity, particularly in his home province of **Katanga** and its primary city **Lubumbashi**, means that an immediate arrest of Katumbi would spark tensions.⁸ The government has sought to placate opposition fears of a crackdown by pardoning a number of political

¹ Radio Okapi, 5 Jul 2016.

² Radio Okapi, 5 Jul 2016.

³ Jeune Afrique, 11 Jul 2016.

⁴ Katumbi in Radio Okapi, 5 Jul 2016.

⁵ Mende in Reuters, 5 Jul 2016.

⁶ International Business Times, 25 Jul 2016.

⁷ Mwamba in International Business Times, 25 Jul 2016.

⁸ Radio Okapi, 22 Jul 2016.

prisoners on 22 July.⁹ The president granted pardon to six members of activist group **Lutte pour la Changement (Lucha)** (Struggle for change) whom the government convicted in March 2015 of incitement to revolt.¹⁰ The pardons include Lucha leader **Fred Bauma**, but do not include activist **Jean-Claude Muyambo** who is serving a five-year term for alleged fraud relating to a property transaction.¹¹ Kabila also pardoned all prisoners who are female, disabled, 65 or older, 30 or younger, or who were sentenced to less than three years, with the exception of fugitives and people convicted of serious crimes such as rape, murder, corruption, treason and genocide.¹² The release followed the call on 21 July of **Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein**, the **United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**, to the government to release political prisoners in the run up to the elections.¹³ Hussein released a list of prisoners whom police and the intelligence services have detained without trial since March 2015.¹⁴

However, the opposition is preparing for a more serious confrontation with Kabila's regime. Veteran opposition leader and president of the **Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social (UDPS)** **Etienne Tshisekedi** will return to DRC for a rally on 31 July.¹⁵ Tshisekedi has said that he will participate in a dialogue with the president over the elections. However, opposition bloc **G7** spokesperson **Olivier Kamitatu** told the media on 25 July that:

*"It's clear today that the conditions posed by the opposition to hold the national dialogue – liberating the political space – are not met. Certainly, there was a gesture from Kabila with three pardon orders to liberate prisoners but those renewed threats [against Katumbi] mean the commitment by the facilitation has failed. It is no longer a dialogue but a monologue. As long as we don't have a political agreement, we're heading for a confrontation."*¹⁶

Kabila's allies have fanned the flames by openly proclaiming that the president will have a third term, in contradiction with the current constitution. **Ramazani Shadari**, the deputy-leader of Kabila's **Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie (PPRD)**, told the media that the population would insist on a third term:

*"There will be a third term for Kabila that the population is going to impose. This will be either by referendum or by another means."*¹⁷

Shadari has pulled back from the comments, arguing that he was referring only to popular support and not an official PPRD policy.¹⁸ However, PPRD secretary general **Henri Mova Sakani** has also suggested a referendum could change constitutional term limits as in neighbouring **Rwanda** and **Republic of Congo (RoC)**.¹⁹ The prospect of opposition dissent over a referendum on term limits has caused **Maman Sidikou**, the head of **United Nations (UN)** peacekeeping forces **Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en RDCongo (MONUSCO)**, to prepare his forces for political violence.²⁰

*"I am concerned that in the absence of a credible and meaningful political dialogue among Congolese stakeholders, tensions could degenerate into a severe crisis, with a high risk of relapse into violence and instability."*²¹

⁹ Radio Okapi, 22 Jul 2016.

¹⁰ Radio Okapi, 22 Jul 2016.

¹¹ Radio Okapi, 22 Jul 2016.

¹² Radio Okapi, 22 Jul 2016.

¹³ UNHRC release, 21 Jul 2016.

¹⁴ UNHRC release, 21 Jul 2016.

¹⁵ Reuters, 14 Jul 2016.

¹⁶ Kamitatu in International Business Times, 25 Jul 2016.

¹⁷ Shadari in Politico.cc, 18 Jul 2016.

¹⁸ Reuters, 21 Jul 2016.

¹⁹ Reuters, 21 Jul 2016.

²⁰ Reuter, 5 Jul 2016.

²¹ Sidikou in Reuters, 5 Jul 2016.

World Bank suspends funding for Inga 3 hydro project

The World Bank has suspended its funding programme for the **Inga 3** hydroelectric power project in DRC after years of disagreement over the project.²² The World Bank and the government reportedly fell out over the “*strategic direction*”²³ of the 4.8 gigawatt (GW) power project.²⁴ The World Bank agreed to a \$73.1m grant for the project in 2014, but had dispersed just 6% of this in the intervening two years.²⁵ Disagreements between the government and the World Bank had led to delays to the construction of the project, which authorities believed would start in June 2017, before the World Bank cut funding.²⁶

The DRC government in May revealed that it was unable to meet the costs of the project with the World Bank grant and its own funding. It has put the project out to tender and has two primary consortia interested in working with it on the project.²⁷ These are led by **China-based Three Gorges Corporation** and **Spain-based engineering firm Actividades de Construcción y Servicios SA.**²⁸ **Bruno Kapandji**, head of the **Agence pour la promotion, le développement et la mise en œuvre du projet Grand Inga (ADPI)** (Agency for the promotion, development and implementation of the Grand Inga project), told the media that the government was not concerned about the World Bank pulling out:

*“It’s nothing serious. Inga is a private-public partnership...the process continues.”*²⁹

It is not clear what impact the World Bank pulling out will have on the project. DRC has promised South Africa power from Inga III by 2020, a deadline that it is highly unlikely to meet.³⁰ The delay in developing the project will also hold back economic development. This affects both small businesses that have unreliable power supply and larger mining operations that drive much of DRC’s economic growth. DRC has enough potential hydropower capacity to become a major power exporter to the region – primarily through the **Grand Inga Hydropower Project** which has an estimated peak output of 44GW and is estimated to cost \$50-\$80 billion.³¹ However, the government has only brought 2GW of this only through the **Inga 1** and **Inga 2** projects that opened in 1972 and 1982 respectively.³² Since 1982 DRC has only managed to add another 370 megawatts (MW) (i.e. 0.37GW) to its power generation.³³

Government and WHO begin yellow fever vaccination drive

Health authorities in DRC have begun a drive to vaccinate over 1 million people in 10 days from yellow fever, to prevent an outbreak from spreading in the densely populated capital **Kinshasa**.³⁴ Due to a global shortage of the vaccine, DRC’s authorities have struggled to contain the disease in Kinshasa and in **Kwango Province** on the **Angolan** border.³⁵ Suspected cases in DRC increased by 38% from June 24 to July 11 to 1,798 and officials also confirmed 85 deaths as of July 11.³⁶ The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** postponed the vaccination programme, due to take place in the border area and

²² World Bank press release, 25 Jul 2016.

²³ World Bank press release, 25 Jul 2016.

²⁴ World Bank press release, 25 Jul 2016.

²⁵ Reuters, 26 Jul 2016.

²⁶ Reuters, 26 Jul 2016.

²⁷ Reuters, 26 Jul 2016.

²⁸ Reuters, 26 Jul 2016.

²⁹ Kapandji in Reuters, 26 Jul 2016.

³⁰ Reuters, 26 Jul 2016.

³¹ World Bank press release, 25 Jul 2016.

³² www.worldbank.org

³³ www.worldbank.org

³⁴ Radio Okapi, 20 Jul 2016.

³⁵ Reuters, 20 Jul 2016.

³⁶ Reuters, 15 Jul 2016.

Kinshasa, which needs to deliver a vaccine to an estimated 10 million people.³⁷ This programme will create an “*immune buffer*” to prevent further spread of the disease. Health authorities expect a shipment to arrive from **Brazil** in August. The vaccination drive in Kinshasa and Kwango will expend the remaining supplies of the vaccine to prevent further outbreaks in neighbouring **Kongo Central, Kasai, Kasai Central** and **Lualaba Provinces**.³⁸

A significant potential stumbling block for the vaccination campaign is a lack of financing. The WHO is still searching for \$20m to pay for the \$34m vaccination programme.³⁹ Officials say that the WHO may start using only a fifth of the usual dose of the vaccine for each person in order to preserve supplies of the vaccine, as it takes a year to produce. This lower dosage will stop the spread of the disease in the short term but will not provide lifetime immunity.⁴⁰ However, further delays to vaccinate risk the start of the rainy season in September and increase the risk of the virus spreading, as rain increases the prevalence of mosquitoes that spread the disease.⁴¹

The DRC has a good track record of dealing with the outbreak of epidemics as seen by the rapid response to the Ebola outbreak in 2015. However, WHO assistant director **Bruce Aylward** told the media that the usual response of vaccinating the rural population is no longer sufficient in containing yellow fever despite the success of this approach over the last 10 years. This is due to the general trend of migration into the cities that has brought yellow fever – usually a rural disease – into large urban areas.⁴² The difficulty of running vaccination programmes in densely populated city areas, particularly in Kinshasa, may also hamper efforts to contain the disease.⁴³ There is evidence of this effect in Angola where, despite the vaccination of some 15 million people, local transmission remains a “*high concern*” for the WHO.⁴⁴ The disease continues to spread in 12 highly populated provinces including **Luanda**. However, health officials have reported no new cases in **Luanda Province** for more than five weeks.⁴⁵

Implications

Katumbi’s eventual return to DRC could serve as a trigger point for protests and potentially violent clashes between government and opposition forces. However, the government is well aware of this and is likely to make sure Katumbi is arrested and quickly moved into custody as soon as he lands. Tshisekedi’s return to DRC may split opposition support between Katumbi and the G7, who want to face Kabila head on, and the UDPS which takes a more conciliatory tone and participate in the national dialogue. A split opposition could prove less effective in heading off the government’s new plan to hold a referendum to alter the constitution. Neighbouring governments have done this to great effect, and there is a strong chance that Kabila could win such a vote. His party and allies control much of the local apparatus of government and are effective at restricting opposition parties’ access to broadcast and print media. Kabila is unlikely to say explicitly that he feels there should be a referendum on term limits, but statements from high up in the PPRD are likely to have come from the president himself.

There is an increasing chance of violence escalating before, during and after a vote – whether an election or a referendum. MONUSCO has the forces to intervene but failed to act during violence around the 2011 election. It is unlikely that it will step in either to prevent violent incidents or to carry out the other part of its mandate: to ensure peaceful democratic regime change in DRC.

The precise nature of the strategic differences between the World Bank and the DRC government over Inga 3 are unclear. However, the two partners have clashed over the progress of the dam for some

³⁷ Reuters, 15 Jul 2016.

³⁸ Reuters, 15 Jul 2016.

³⁹ Le Journal de Montréal/WHO, 7 Jul 2016.

⁴⁰ WHO, 15 Jul 2016.

⁴¹ Jeune Afrique, 7 Jul 2016.

⁴² CIDRAP, 11 Jul 2016.

⁴³ MSF, 27 Jun 2016.

⁴⁴ WHO, 15 Jul 2016.

⁴⁵ All Africa News, 7 Jul 2016.

time. It is likely that the ADPI's desire to sell electricity to South Africa, before putting it into the national grid, was a major sticking point. DRC will easily be able to make up the shortfall in funds, particularly if it goes with the Chinese consortium. However, it has lost further credibility with international institutions and may lose out on further funding in the long term.

The yellow fever outbreak will not cause widespread loss of life, however it demonstrates the dangers of DRC's health services being ill equipped to deal with large-scale outbreaks in densely populated areas. If a more deadly disease spread through the city, it could have a significantly worse impact. If DRC closes its border with Angola to try to halt the spread further, there will be some impact on the artisanal diamond mining trade, and a corresponding increase in cross-border smuggling. Business travelers to DRC should take care in Kinshasa if they have not received a yellow fever vaccine.

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