



**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



RAPED FOR SUPPORTING THE OPPOSITION

Coquette Nsinga, a 25-year-old student, was arrested, beaten, held incommunicado and raped. All because of her membership of the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC), an opposition political party in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Coquette believes she was led into a trap by the security services in October 2006, following presidential elections. On 31 October, Coquette, her mother and two other women telephoned the MLC headquarters to find out how to collect allowances for their work as election monitors. They were told by someone purporting to be a senior official to go to a restaurant in the centre of Kinshasa.

At the restaurant, the four women were arrested by police from the special services and intelligence unit (DRGS). They were driven to Kin-Mazière police station, the DRGS headquarters, where they were beaten by police officers. The officers took Coquette's money, MLC membership card, mobile phone and jewellery and questioned her about her political activities.

Coquette had been held incommunicado and without formal charge for three weeks when five police officers took her from her cell, led her to another room and raped her. Since then, she has suffered from back and stomach pains and has had no medical care. She does not know the extent of her injuries or whether she contracted any sexually transmitted infections. She also experienced other forms of torture and ill-treatment during her detention.

When the UN peacekeeping force visited the police station, she and other detainees were hidden in an underground cell.

After seven months, Coquette was moved to Kinshasa's central prison and brought before a military tribunal. She was charged with "incitement (of military personnel) to commit acts contrary to duty or discipline", a charge which carries a sentence of between five and 20 years' imprisonment. Amnesty International believes the charges are politically motivated.

Rape by government security forces or armed groups in DRC is widespread. Women and girls who have been raped often suffer from discrimination and rejection by their families and communities.

Law enforcement agents in the DRC also routinely commit torture, rape in custody and arbitrary arrest. Politically motivated arrests and abuses have become particularly common since the 2006 elections, with supporters of opposition parties and journalists at greatest risk. In some cases they are killed.

Independent human rights monitors are denied access to particular police and military detention sites.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. Write to President Joseph Kabila

Start your letter " Monsieur le Président" or "Your Excellency"

Président Joseph Kabila
Présidence de la République
Kinshasa Gombe
République Démocratique du Congo

Email: pr@presidentrdc.cd or pp@presidentrdc.cd

In your letter ask President Kabila to:

- undertake an **independent investigation** into the allegation of rape and bring those responsible to justice
- give Coquette Nsinga immediate **access to medical care**
- **free Coquette and her mother** immediately, unless they are charged with a recognizably criminal offence
- ensure that if they are tried, it is before a **civilian court**, not a military tribunal

2. Send a message of support to Coquette Nsinga

Coquette Nsinga
Centre Pénitentiaire et de Rééducation de Kinshasa (CPRK)
Makala, Kinshasa
République Démocratique du Congo

Coquette Nsinga speaks French. If you do not speak French, please use the message:

Nous sommes de tout cœur avec vous. Gardez courage. (We are with you wholeheartedly. Keep your courage up.)

