



THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF
JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

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From The European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses

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Democratic Republic of Congo

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses (EAJW) is a charity registered in the United Kingdom. It assists adherents of the faith of Jehovah's Witnesses in various areas of the world.
2. The Christian community of Jehovah's Witnesses has been present in the Democratic Republic of Congo since the early 1930's. Jehovah's Witnesses were first registered on 26 October 1961. They renewed their registration on 30 April 1980. Their activities were banned from 1986 until the Supreme Court annulled the ban in 1993, giving them opportunity to carry out their worship without serious interference from State officials. They are thankful for being allowed to peacefully attend religious meetings and conventions and to engage in their religious community service without major obstacles.

II. SUMMARY - RECOMMENDATIONS

While the central government endeavours to react to religiously-motivated violence when it is reported, at times the local authorities in Congo neglect their duty to follow up on serious violations and fail to adequately prosecute the perpetrators. Even as Jehovah's Witnesses seek justice in the courts, they remain subject to the continued threat of illegal acts perpetrated by law-defying members of the Kimbilikiti cult. They are also in danger of reprisals for taking matters to court.

The government's failure to properly prosecute hate crimes creates a climate of impunity, and Jehovah's Witnesses report an alarming increase in religiously-motivated violence. This includes not only the destruction of places of worship and private property, but also rape, kidnapping and murder.

Jehovah's Witnesses in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and as a worldwide organisation, respectfully request the government of Congo to:

- (1) react firmly to the religiously-motivated violence when it is reported to them. Local authorities in Congo at times neglect their duty to follow up on serious violations and fail to adequately prosecute the perpetrators;
- (2) take the necessary measures to ensure the physical protection of Jehovah's Witnesses against the aggression of Kimbilikiti followers;
- (3) prosecute the criminals responsible for the physical abuse against Jehovah's Witnesses;
- (4) stop expelling children of Jehovah's Witnesses from schools because of their religious beliefs.

III. PHYSICAL AGGRESSIONS

A. Murder of Mrs Kibuya Matangi in the village of Kandale secteur, Gungu, Kwilu

3. On 2 October 2016, Mrs Kibuya Matangi, a 79-year-old Witness, was brutally murdered during the night. The previous year, after the death of a family member, her family had accused her of sorcery and assaulted her. Later she was forced to consult an exorcist priest but she refused because of her religious beliefs. During the night of 2 October, an unidentified assailant violently attacked her with a knife and then fled into the darkness of the night. She died en route to the hospital.
4. As has happened in other villages, the local authorities (village chief, chief of sector and customary chief) seem to condone or support the actions of villagers who try to force the Witnesses to consult spirit mediums.
5. On 25 September 2017, the County Court of Bulungu sentenced 7 of the perpetrators to 12 months in prison on the grounds of infringement of freedom of worship. Another perpetrator

was sentenced to 20 years and 12 months in prison and the last one to life imprisonment. However, none of them have been arrested.



Mrs Matangi

B. Kimbilikiti followers attack and rape Jehovah's Witnesses in Alunguli, Kindu, Province of Maniema

6. On 8 November 2016, members of the ancestral religion called Kimbilikiti attacked Jehovah's Witnesses in Kindu because the Witnesses refused the Kimbilikiti ritual religious initiation. This violence is particularly worrying since members of the Kimbilikiti cult murdered eight Witness men in Pangi in 1983.
7. The mob of Kimbilikiti followers began destroying and burning houses of people in the area. The mob stoned the Kingdom Hall and started saying that they would exterminate Jehovah's Witnesses.
8. They attacked three families of Jehovah's Witnesses as follows:
 - i. The family of Mr Joseph Mukombe (a family of four children): Members of the cult stole all of their belongings and burned their house down. They beat all of the members of the family. Tragically, cult members raped Mrs Awewazayi Takubusoga, the wife of Joseph Mukombe.
 - ii. The family of Mr Mupenda Misumba (a family of six children): Members of the cult stole all of their belongings. Their house was partially destroyed and the wall of the house fell on the mother-in-law. She was sent to the hospital for neck and chest pain.
 - iii. The family of Mr Bin Omari Kabungulu (a family of four children): Members of the cult stole all of their belongings and partially destroyed their house. Cult members raped 24-year-old Loyise Furah, who was pregnant at the time.



Woman raped



Houses destroyed and burned

9. The local radio station spoke about this event, specifically saying that Jehovah's Witnesses were among those targeted in this riot.
10. The charges against the minor who attacked the Musumba family, have been filed at the Juvenile Court of Kindu. The hearing scheduled for 1 July 2017 did not take place because he fled to the territory of Shabunda. On 27 July 2017, one of the perpetrators was sentenced to 15 years detention and fined USD 5,000 but was convicted for rape. Another minor was convicted for rape, but the court merely rebuked him, increased parental surveillance and fined him CDF 1,000,000 (about USD 660).

C. Child kidnapping in Kigoma (Makangala), Province of Sud-Kivu

11. On 11 July 2016, 14-year-old V.D.N. was kidnapped and taken to the forest by a group of Kimbilikiti followers to be initiated into the cult. They held him for an entire year. Only one Kimbilikiti follower, was prosecuted. He was sentenced to two years in prison and ordered to pay CDF 1,000,000 (about USD 660) to the child's father.
12. On 18 July 2016, a week after the kidnapping, a Kimbilikiti member sent a message demanding from the father to pay CDF 20,000 so as to provide clothing for the child for the religious initiation. The child's father refused on religious grounds.
13. On 28 July 2016, 6 cult members attacked the father with whips and rods and tried to take him into the forest. When he resisted, they beat him and left him for dead. Only one Kimbilikiti follower was prosecuted. He was sentenced to two months of imprisonment.

D. Attack on Mr Jean Kishibisha Nyambo in the village of Mwenga Centre

14. On 15 August 2012, in the village of Mwenga Centre, Province of Sud-Kivu, Mr Jean Kishibisha Nyambo was attacked because he refused to participate in the initiation rites of the Kimbilikiti. The Provincial Minister has obstructed all efforts to prosecute the offenders.

E. Attack on Mr Dem Muzega Munzudi in the village of Mukoso

15. On 15 December 2015, in the village of Mukoso, Province of Kwango, Mr Muzega Munzudi and other witnesses were assaulted for refusing to consult a medium. Mr Muzega was severely beaten and threatened with death. The chief of the sector of Mukoso has interfered, so that the victims are still waiting for justice to be executed.

F. Attack on Mr Komi Mavula and Mr Madayila Kamanda in the village of Kingodji

16. On 25 February 2015, in the village of Kingodji, Feshi, Province of Kwango, Mr Komi Mavula and Mr Madayila Kamanda were assaulted and threatened with death for their refusal to consult a spirit medium. The chief of the village interfered, and the victims are still waiting for justice to be executed.

G. Murder of Mr Thambwe Nzovu in the city of Gungu, in Kwilu Province

17. Mr Thambwe Nzovu was one of Jehovah's Witnesses and had four children. He was living in the village of Katopa.
18. On 6 November 2016, at 5:00 a.m., four of his nephews beat him and forcibly took him to a medium.
19. Late, during the night of 10 December 2016, Mr Thambwe Nzovu died in the house of that medium. His four nephews secretly buried the corpse without informing his wife and children.

20. The case is filed at the prosecutor's office of the city of Bulungu. While the prosecution is a positive step, the victim's family had to pay USD 3,350 to the authorities to fund the arrest and transportation of the perpetrators.
21. During February 2017, seven of Jehovah's Witnesses from the same area where the murder of Thambwe Nzovu took place underwent very violent threats because they refused to consult a medium. Their names are as follows: Mr Godé Kamizelo, Mr Kadiata Kingambo, Mr Ndongji Kumanda, Mr Mikumbu Luweja, Mr Mishio Mbuta, Mr Makinisihi Niange and Mr Gilbert Manango. All of them were forced to seek refuge in the city of Gungu, ten kilometers away from their home.

H. Physical Assault against Jean-Marie Gibatshi Kitshiva, village of Mirwa, territory of Gungu, the province of Kwilu

22. On 28 February 2017, Mr Jean-Marie Gibatshi Kitshiba, a 60-year-old father of eight children and one of Jehovah's Witnesses, was attacked by one of his cousins and eight other family members because their spirit medium had said that Mr Gibatshi is a sorcerer. His attackers assaulted him and seriously injured him with machetes because he refused to submit to exorcism by the medium. They burned down his house, causing his wife and children to flee.



Mr Gibatshi wounded

23. Out of the 11 alleged perpetrators, only 2 were arrested by the prosecutor's office.

I. Murder of Mr Mukoso KINGELEJI in Mangalangongo, Province of Bandundu

24. On 17 August 2014, family members brutally murdered Mr Kingeleji Mukoso, one of Jehovah's Witnesses. They cut Mr Kingeleji's throat because of his determination to stick to his religious beliefs as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.



Mr Kingeleji and his children His Dead body

25. Of the 12 perpetrators who were convicted, 6 are now imprisoned. The remaining six fled, and a warrant has been issued for their arrest.
26. The three judges contacted the victim's lawyers to ask for money before rendering the decision. The request for money was rejected. After that, the witnesses' testimony disappeared from the court file. A provincial deputy, intervened in favour of the perpetrators and had them released.

J. Physical assault on Mr Radjabu in the territory of Fizi, Sud Kivu

27. On 2 November 2016, Village Chief invited a medium to "purify" his village. All the inhabitants of the village were obliged to pay the medium. Sadly, the aggressors broke the door of Mr Radjabu's house and took him by force to have him consult the medium. When he resisted, they severely beat him and left him bleeding on the ground. Because the police supported the medium, the Witnesses were afraid to report the assault.

K. Rape in the village of Lite, Equator

28. On 28 May 2017, Mrs Besingi was beaten, raped and forced to drink "spiritualist water" because she refused to participate in a religious ceremony.

L. Attack and kidnappings by Kimbilikiti followers, village of Luyulu, South Kivu

29. On 29 July 2017, in the village of Luyuyu, a crowd kidnapped four individuals who are studying with Jehovah's Witnesses. This crowd obeyed the orders of the leaders of the Kimbilikiti initiation. The four victims of the kidnapping aged between 16 and 25 are all residing in the village of Luyuyu. They were taken by force to the forest to undergo the practises of the Kimbilikiti.

M. Beating and illegal arrest in Wapinda, Equator

30. In January 2018, the leader of a Church, in cooperation with local authorities, obligated everyone in the village to give money so that a strange kind of water could be delivered to the village. When 50-year-old Mr. Baba refused to comply, church members severely beat him and put him in prison. On 1 February 2018, he was released from the prison after paying CDF 5,000 (about USD 3) and one hen.

N. Village of Luono, Province of Kwango

31. On 12 April 2018, the chief of the village invited a medium to “free” the village from extreme poverty. Mr and Mrs Mputu, who are Jehovah's Witnesses, refused to participate. Thus, at 4:00 p.m., the leaders of the village and a group of six men severely beat the couple and threatened to kill them.

O. Village of Fube, Katanga Province

32. In April 2018, a spirit medium was invited by the chief of the Mwenga Community and the chief of the village, to “annihilate the sorcerers” in the village. Since Jehovah's Witnesses refused to comply, they were victims of assault and battery, arson and other mistreatment.

33. Mr Mizoa Mupisi, a 63-year-old Witness, was assaulted and tortured. All of his belongings were plundered or burned. He lost his money and many legal documents.

34. Mrs Mado Katayi, a 52-year-old Witness, was summoned by the chief of the village where she was taken by force to see the medium. Once there, she was forced to endure religious ceremonies and was tortured until she became unconscious. Mrs Katayi is now hospitalized in Lubumbashi. The medical staff refused to provide her medical records to the Witnesses assisting her until the prosecutors' office completes the investigation.

P. Death Threat and Physical Assault, village Pangu Onatra, Kwilu

35. On 9 September 2018, Mr Florent Mungakweje and Mr Maker Mbimbele were accused of sorcery by an individual, who consulted a medium because one of their family members was sick. The individual, along with other family members, threatened Mr Maker with death and burned down his house. This mob also severely beat Mr Florent, stabbed him with machetes and burned his house.



Mr Florent



Burned house

IV. EXPULSIONS FROM SCHOOLS (SEE APPENDIX)

36. Although Congolese law prohibits all forms of religious discrimination in all schools, we are sad to report that in many of the schools run by churches, children of Jehovah's Witnesses are still victims of religious discrimination. Witness children are still being expelled from government-regulated Catholic, Muslim and Protestant schools, and this trend keeps spreading. The main reason for these expulsions is the refusal to attend worship organised by Catholic priests or Muslims and the refusal to wear Islamic veils or to pray according to their doctrines.

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37. This matter is of concern especially for children in remote villages where these schools provide the only education available for the community. During the 2015-2016 school year, Jehovah's Witnesses in Congo received 49 reports of expulsion from different areas of the country.
38. Since then, we have recorded other similar cases. In a Protestant school named Institut Buziba, in the city of Kamituga, Sud-Kivu, eight students who are Jehovah's Witnesses were expelled on 17 November 2016 because they refused to attend Protestant worship organised by the school.
39. On 30 November 2016, the students' parents wrote to request the cancellation of the expulsion of their children, but the school authorities did not react favourably. These students lost about six months of education, essentially the loss of the complete school year.

All of the above is respectfully submitted by

The European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses