

Honourable Minister;

I am writing to express my grave concern on six members of the Lutte pour le Changement (LUCHA) youth movement who have been sentenced to two years in prison on charges of "attempting to incite disobedience".

The six were arrested on 16 February in Goma, hours before a general strike held in protest against delays in organizing the 2016 general elections in Democratic Republic of Congo. Rebecca Kavugho, Serge Sivyavugha, Justin Kambale Mutsongo, Melka Kamundu, John Anipenda and Ghislain Muhiwa were sentenced to two years in prison. I believe the six activists have been convicted solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

I would like to be calling on the DRC authorities to drop all charges against the six LUCHA activists in Goma and to immediately and unconditionally release them.

I also urge them to ensure that the six LUCHA activists are not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment while in detention.

Sincerely yours,