



UNIVERSITY  
OF  
JOHANNESBURG



# THE SAIFAC AFRICA FORUM

## CAN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO BECOME A DEMOCRACY?

For close to six decades, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been the theatre of rebellions and civil wars which have claimed more than eight million human lives. There have also been numerous cases of extrajudicial killings, torture as well as sexual violence against civilians in the Eastern part of the country. Armed groups have been on the increase, fighting against each other and against the security forces over the control of natural resources, resulting in instability in the entire country.

Many in the international community have hailed the December 2018 elections in the DRC as the first-ever peaceful hand-over of power in the post-independence era in the DRC effected through elections. Numerous dissenting voices claim that the elections were a sham – ‘an electoral coup’ - and have only endorsed an illegitimate leadership. Who is correct?

Given an alliance between the party of Joseph Kabila and that of President Tshisekedi and Vital Kamhere, many now see Tshisekedi as Kabila’s puppet. Kabila is seen to retain a firm influence over the army, the judiciary, public enterprises and other influential sectors.

Nonetheless, there still exists an iota of hope in terms of the actions taken so far by the President. He has released influential opposition political figures and many other prisoners throughout the country. Illegal prisons have been identified and shut down. The country’s image is gradually being redeemed as the president has started reaching out to civil society organisations and also to neighbouring countries such as Rwanda. Action has also been taken against senior state officials alleged to be involved in corrupt practices.

Despite these strides registered, commentators are still of the opinion that the country still lags behind in terms

of restoring the rule of law, promoting human rights and democratic principles enshrined in both national and international instruments and good governance.

Against this backdrop, the South African Institute for Advanced Constitutional, Public, Human Rights and International Law (SAIFAC), a centre of the University of Johannesburg is organising a panel discussion to discuss a number of the following significant questions related to the future of democracy, good governance and human rights in the DRC:

Could the elections in 2018 be considered to have been free and fair?

Have there been improvements in the democratic institutions and structures in the DRC?

What are the prospects for developing a stable democracy in the DRC?

Can armed conflict be reduced and eventually eliminated?

What steps are necessary to address the human rights violations that take place regularly in the DRC?

What can a country such as South Africa do to improve the situation relating to democracy and human rights in the DRC?

Details of the event are as follows:

**DATE:** Tuesday 13 August 2019.

**TIME:** 17h30 for 18h00 – 20h00

**VENUE:** Women’s Gaol, Constitution Hill (Underground parking available)

**RSVP:** Please RSVP to Naomi Hove at [naomi@saifac.org.za](mailto:naomi@saifac.org.za) for catering purposes

Refreshments will be served before the seminar.



CONSTITUTIONHILL

