

# Congo. U.N. Advisory Committee on the Congo - correspondence, statements, p...

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Congo - 1961

20 Jan.

Kasavubu, Joseph (President of the Congo)

- 1 letter from D.H. (through his Special  
Represent. in the Congo)

Letter of 20 January 1961 addressed by the Secretary-General to  
President Kasavubu through his Special Representative in the Congo

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Mr. President,

In my letter of 19 January I have addressed to you my immediate observations on the transfer of Mr. Lumumba and others to Katanga. I wish to inform you that the same matter has today been discussed by the Advisory Committee on the Congo which, while unanimously and fully approving of the views I expressed in my letter, felt that important additional observations were in order.

The Advisory Committee has, as you know, under a mandate from the General Assembly, set up the Conciliation Commission which at present is in the Congo. In accordance with this mandate the Committee takes special interest in and feels a special responsibility for efforts promoting the reunification and reconciliation within the Congo. They do so while fully recognizing that steps to that effect depend solely on the Congolese themselves and that their authority in the matter is limited by the fact that this, basically, is a matter of domestic concern although, as fully recognized by the General Assembly and the Security Council, of such international concern as to entitle the Organization to express views and give advice.

The Advisory Committee feels strongly that the incarceration of various political leaders is incompatible with successful efforts to achieve the aims which you yourself, Mr. President, have stated as being yours. They are of the strong conviction that negotiations cannot be conducted among political leaders as long as some of them are detained and thus unable in freedom to express their views or to take part in deliberations. This general observation, which is amply justified by experience, has special application in the present situation where, as is well known, one of those incarcerated commands a position in wide sections of the public which would make any solution arrived at without proper contact with him unstable.

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In these circumstances the Committee considers it appropriate to draw to your urgent attention the serious bearing on the efforts towards reconciliation and national unification which the continued imprisonment of Mr. Lumumba seems to it to have, especially as months have passed without any steps having been taken in order to clarify his position in accordance with the rules of due process of law. Obviously, the political significance of these observations is enhanced by the recent transfer of Mr. Lumumba which cannot but aggravate the complications created by his arrest and detention.

When bringing these serious and urgent considerations of the Advisory Committee, to which I fully subscribe, to your attention, I wish at the same time to mention that I have received confirmed and incontrovertible reports regarding brutal manhandling of Mr. Lumumba and his companions on the occasion of their transfer. These reports force me to re-emphasize with all vigour my insistent appeal that they be given humane treatment in accordance with generally accepted principles and in line with what the United Nations and its representatives try to urge for all persons, irrespective of political orientation or race, as part of its duty to maintain the protection of life and property.

I have the honour to be, etc...