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Democratic Republic of Congo

Constitutional tampering in DRC

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Officially, the second and final term of Félix Tshisekedi, president of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), ends at the end of 2028. But the latter, in several of his statements, has said he is ready to run for a third term if “the people want it”. The opposition is calling for a large demonstration on 15 September 2026 against a third term for Tshisekedi, who is retaliating with a tailor-made national dialogue.

The great presidential manoeuvres

To this end, the presidential majority presented a referendum law to amend the Constitution, which was validated by the Constitutional Court on 30 July. A change in the basic law would therefore allow Tshisekedi to reset the counters and run for a new term. A classic sleight of hand that many potentates have used.

This offensive by the government is taking place while the Ebola epidemic is out of control and the M23/AFC (*Alliance Fleuve Congo*) militia, supported by Rwanda, militarily occupies a large part of the east of the country. The government leaders are using this situation to impose the idea that all those who criticize the government are in the pay of Rwanda.

The opposition has formed a front against the third term, called Coalition 64 (C64) in reference to article 64 of the constitution, which states: “Every Congolese has the duty to defeat any individual or group of individuals who takes power by force or who exercises it in violation of the provisions of this constitution.” This coalition has demanded the establishment of a national dialogue to address the social, economic and security problems facing the DRC.

Dividing the opposition and buying time

Categorically rejected by Tshisekedi at first, despite pressure from the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO), which represents a significant weight in society, this proposal was finally accepted by the president, but on his terms. He has set several red lines: the non-participation of supporters of the M23/AFC — he is targeting in particular the former head of state Joseph Kabila, sentenced to death for treason; the non-questioning of the Congolese vote, a way of ensuring that his power will not be challenged.

He also defined the terms of the dialogue, which will first take place by region, before being centralized at the national level, in Kinshasa, the capital. While CENCO seems to be accommodating these terms, the opposition has denounced the *ukase* against the M23/AFC which, if it is indeed supported by Rwanda, is no less indicative of very real problems concerning the allocation of land and the control of mineral wealth.

In the absence of a timetable, Coalition 64 suspects Tshisekedi of playing for time in order to establish, at the end of his mandate, a transitional government by taking advantage of the heterogeneous and venal character of the opposition to integrate part of it.

Already, during the last presidential and legislative elections, Tshisekedi had managed to poach a number of opponents, which allowed him to benefit from a comfortable majority in Parliament, using the same methods as

Joseph Kabila. The latter remained in power two years after the official end of his mandate, appointing Samy Badibanga and Bruno Tshibala as prime ministers from the opposition.

Beyond the struggle for democratic rights, the absence of a social and/or political force attached to the interests of the people is likely to make the regime of these crooked politicians last for a long time to come.

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Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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