

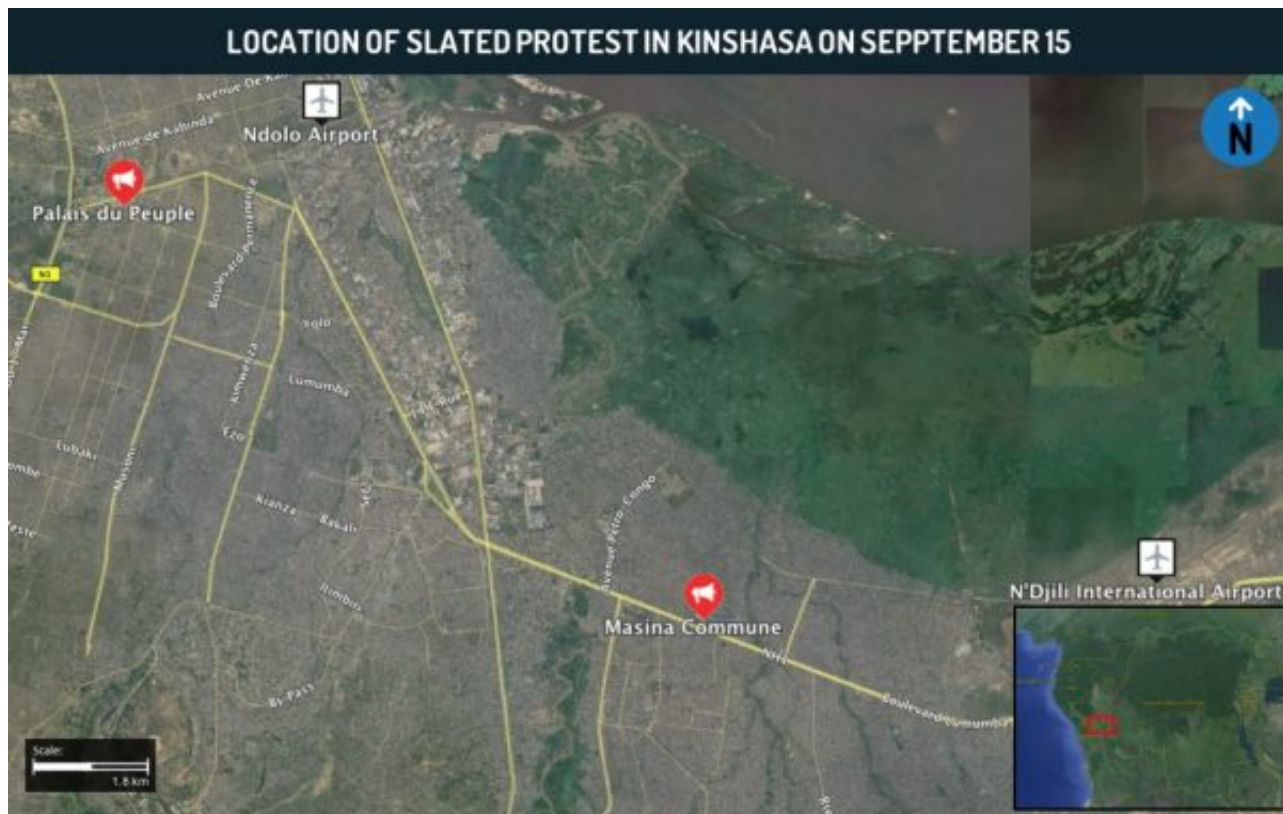
Protest

14SEP
13:18 UTC

DRC Tactical: Opposition parties, civil society to hold protest marches nationwide, including Kinshasa from 08:30 (local time) on September 15; avoid nonessential travel

Please be advised

- According to an official notice released by the Lamuka opposition coalition on September 13, it is expected to hold protest marches nationwide, including in Kinshasa, on September 15.
- Reports citing the Secretary-General of the Engagement for Citizenship and Development (ECIDE) party, which is part of the Lamuka Coalition, indicate that protesters in Kinshasa are slated to gather at district 3 of Masina Commune along Lumumba Boulevard at 08:30 (local time), from where they will start marching before reaching the Palais du Peuple at 16:00. As of writing, the exact route of the march remains unclear.
- Reports indicate that the Peoples' Party for the Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD) party and the Lucha civil society group stated their support for Lamuka's march and called upon their supporters to attend the protest.
- The Kinshasa authorities issued a ban against holding the protest march on September 8, citing concerns of a breach against current COVID-19 preventive measures. On September 13, authorities announced that the protest would be approved if postponed to September 17, which Lamuka rejected.
- The protest is organized to denounce the politicization of the Independent National Election Commission (CENI), the alleged fraudulent nature of electoral reforms in DRC and to demand that the 2023 presidential elections are held on time, preceding the 90 days period before President Felix Tshisekedi's mandate expires.
- Separately, sources indicate that the Social Democrat Party (SDP) announced its intent to hold a protest march in support of President Tshisekedi on September 15 as well. No details were released regarding the time or locations of the slated protest.



Assessments & Forecast

1. The Lamuka coalition and Lucha have consistently been critical of the procedures regarding the appointment of CENI members over the past months, as demonstrated in several protests they held in Kinshasa in late July and early August. To that end, the planned march and its agenda are illustrative of their entrenched concern regarding the fairness of the electoral process, as they perceive President Tshisekedi seeking to establish his influence over the CENI and consequently securing his position towards the 2023 elections. The fact that Lamuka insisted on holding the march as planned is likely intended to further delegitimize the authorities' mentioning of COVID-19 considerations to justify banning the protest, while mass events such as concerts and even political gatherings have continued to take place in Kinshasa in recent days.
2. The reported expected participation of the PPRD party is highly notable considering that it is headed by former President Joseph Kabila and is a central element within Kabila's Common Front for the Congo (FCC) coalition. This is particularly notable given that Lamuka and Lucha are known critics of Kabila and his political structures, and have repeatedly accused Kabila of abusing power and of violating human and civic rights. This does not represent rapprochement between Kabila and Lamuka, but reflects the willingness of the PPRD to align with political rivals to join hands against President Tshisekedi, who sidelined Kabila's allies from power. To that end, the unconfirmed reports regarding a pro-Tshisekedi protest indicate an intention by his supporters to demonstrate force and display an image of entrenched popularity in order to counter any potential for opposition's momentum.
3. **FORECAST:** Considering the known mobilization capabilities of Lamuka, Lucha and the PPRD and the salience of the protest's agenda, the march is likely to witness a significant turnout in the high hundreds to low thousands. Additionally, given precedent, there is a heightened potential for the emergence of localized spontaneous gathering in Kinshasa besides the main march route starting at Masina Commune. Considering the sensitive nature of the protest and its location, the security forces are poised to be heavily deployed in the Masina Commune and in the vicinity of the Palais du Peuple, as well as across Kinshasa, particularly along Lumumba Boulevard and its vicinity, throughout the day. Security forces are liable to erect roadblocks and checkpoints to prevent

participants from gathering, and can be expected to use forceful dispersal measures such as arrests, batons, and tear gas. In these conditions, there remains heightened potential for the emergence of scuffles between protesters and the security forces, as well as between anti-Tshisekedi and pro-Tshisekedi protesters.

Recommendations

Those operating or residing in Kinshasa on September 15 are advised to avoid nonessential travel in the vicinity of the Masina Commune and the Palais du Peuple as well as other large gatherings due to the slated protest and the heightened potential for unrest.