

Kabila bans political activity in Congo

By Karin Davies
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KINSHASA, Congo — The government of President Laurent Kabila on Monday banned political party activity in the capital, further undermining confidence in his promises to liberate the country from years of dictatorship.

Because most opposition groups are based in Kinshasa, the restrictions effectively bar political parties from organizing or meeting anywhere in the country.

The move is reminiscent of those imposed by Mobutu Sese Seko, the dictator Kabila ousted eight days ago, and is likely to anger Western nations that had pressed him to introduce democracy.

Kabila banned political parties outright in some other parts of Congo during his seven-month sweep across the country, which culminated in his declaring himself president on May 17.

Monday's announcement, made on national radio, did not say how long the ban would last or go into details on what it entails.

In the same broadcast, the government announced that soldiers of the ruling Alliance were prohibited from appearing in the streets of Kinshasa without written orders — a response to complaints by some Kinshasans of petty harassment by Alliance soldiers.

The broadcast also repeated earlier bans on public meetings and protest, and called on people holding unregistered weapons to surrender them immediately.

"Any violators will be considered enemies of the liberation of the Congolese people and will be punished to the fullest extent of the law," the radio announcement said.

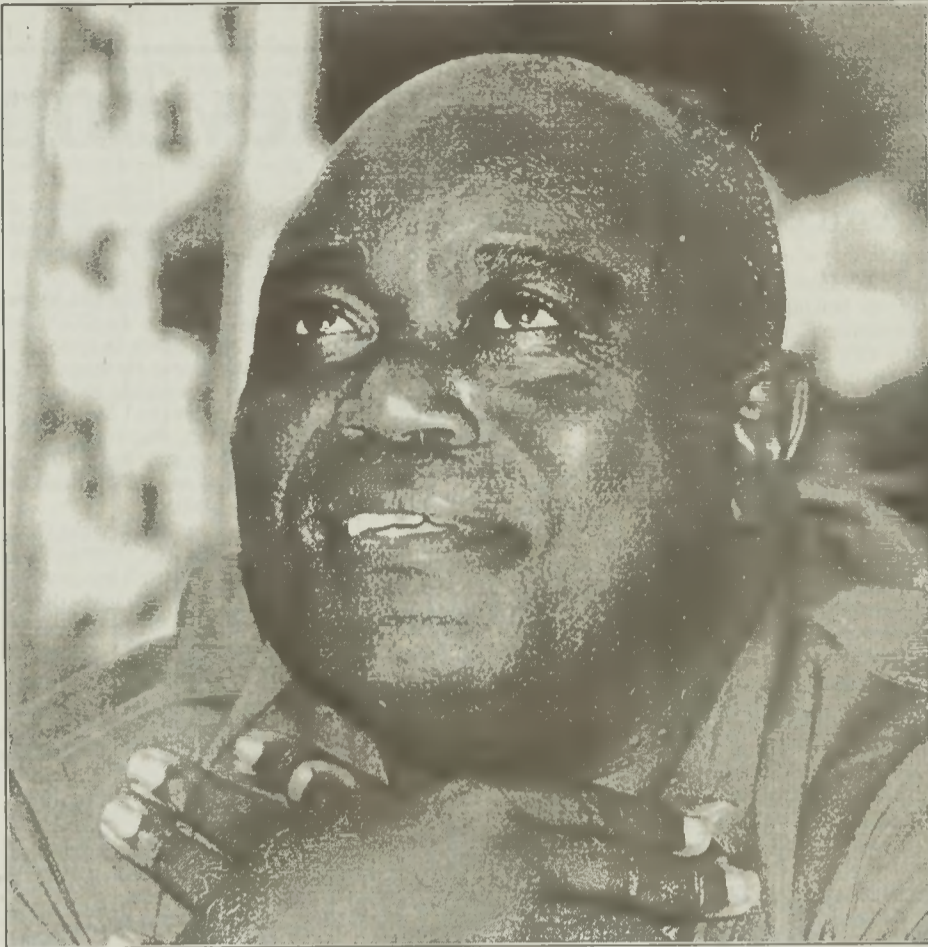
Earlier, opposition leaders had promised to press ahead with a planned protest.

Dominique Kankonde, a spokesman for the opposition Democratic Union for Social Progress, said a march against Kabila would go ahead Wednesday.

"We weren't afraid of Mobutu, and we're not afraid of Kabila," he said.

There had been speculation that supporters of Democratic Union leader Etienne Tshisekedi — passed over by Kabila in the government he announced Friday — would call a "dead city" strike, which in the past have completely shut down Kinshasa.

But students drifted back to schools and workers returned



Congo rebel leader Laurent Kabila gestures as he speaks at a press conference in Goma, eastern Congo earlier this month. Kabila led the overthrow of dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.

to their jobs in the capital on Monday, the first work day since the formation of the new government.

A warning broadcast on state television Sunday night said absent workers would be severely punished. It advised government officials and employers to compile lists of employees who appeared at work and those who did not. Few complied.

The restrictions placed on Kabila's soldiers are a response to complaints from Mobutu-era officers who said they have been summarily kicked out of their quarters in military camps. The government announcement Monday said those soldiers should return to their homes and even provided a telephone number to call if they encountered resistance.

Kabila has kept out of sight since taking power. His only public appearance so far was a staged visit Saturday to a hospital where he said for the first time that elections would have to wait until after a two-year transition period.

While Tshisekedi has been

denied a spot in Kabila's administration, the opposition leader argues that his movement deserves some of the credit for felling Mobutu with a series of strikes and mostly nonviolent protests.

Kabila has invited two of Tshisekedi's supporters to join his administration. One of them, Justine M'Poyo Kasa-Vubu, said Monday she would accept the post of civil service minister despite Tshisekedi's objections.

Kasa-Vubu's father, Joseph Kasa-Vubu, became Congo's first president after the country's independence from Belgium in 1960. He was deposed by Mobutu five years later. Living in exile in Belgium, his daughter has acted as foreign relations spokesman for Tshisekedi's movement.

Kasa-Vubu said she still considered herself a party member and called Tshisekedi her leader, saying there was still a chance that Tshisekedi would join Kabila's government.

"The government is only partially formed. There will be

openings," she said. "Anything is possible."

While Kasa-Vubu made plans to travel to Kinshasa, Finance Minister Mwana Nanga Mawapenga — also a member of Tshisekedi's party — moved into his predecessor's office and met with top members of the previous ministry.

He said he told them corruption would no longer be tolerated.

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2 questioned in Mandela plot

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HARARE, Zimbabwe — Two white South Africans are under investigation for allegedly plotting to assassinate President Nelson Mandela and President Robert Mugabe during a state visit last week, state radio reported Monday.

The radio quoted Acting Police Commissioner Philip Mhike saying the two South Africans, who were not identified, were arrested in the central town of Kwekwe ahead of a visit there by the two leaders on Tuesday.

They were "suspected of having attempted to assassinate the two presidents and investigations are continuing," Mhike told the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corp.

But South African officials said Monday they received no formal information from Zimbabwean police or intelligence officers on the alleged plot or subsequent arrests.

"We would have expected to be informed. There has been no formal communication on the detention of South Africans," said Victor Mditshwa, the second ranking official at the South African diplomatic mission in Harare.

Monday is a public holiday in Zimbabwe and calls to police headquarters in Harare were not returned.

An independent newspaper on Sunday reported unidentified South Africans arrested in a security sweep in Kwekwe, a mining and industrial town 130 miles southwest of Harare, where Mandela had a street named after him in a

public ceremony Tuesday.

The date of the arrests was not available.

Mandela paid a three-day state visit to Zimbabwe before opening a regional economic summit in Harare on Wednesday.

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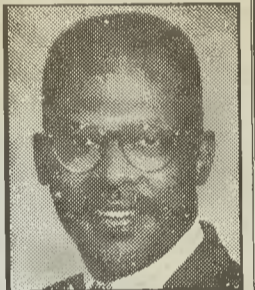
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