Former President of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Joseph Kabila is facing the death penalty after military prosecutors requested the maximum sentence against him on charges including treason and collaboration with the rebel movement AFC/M23.

Kabila, 54, who ruled the DRC for 18 years beginning in 2001, is accused of war crimes, violent crimes committed by M23 rebels, and plotting to overthrow the government.

At a hearing held in the capital Kinshasa on Friday, prosecutors also called for the seizure of all his assets.

Kabila, who did not appear in court, has not made any public statement in response to the death penalty request.

In May, parliament in Kinshasa stripped Kabila of the immunity he previously enjoyed as a former DRC head of state. He did not attend the proceedings to defend himself at the time.

Later that month, the former DRC president launched a scathing attack on his successor Félix Tshisekedi, branding his government “dictatorial” and accusing the judiciary of being “openly used for political reasons.”

Kabila was last seen in public on 30 May in Goma, in eastern DRC, attending a meeting with traditional leaders in an area controlled by M23 rebels.

According to UN-backed broadcaster Radio Okapi, military prosecutor Lucien René Likulia urged the military high court to also impose additional penalties on Kabila, including:

20 years in prison for supporting war crimes;

15 years in prison for attempting to overthrow the government;

his immediate arrest;

payment of legal fees.

Previously, prosecutors had demanded that Kabila pay $24 billion in damages to the Congolese state.

Ferdinand Kambere, permanent secretary of Kabila’s banned PPRD party, dismissed the case as “a relentless campaign to persecute an opposition figure.”

The trial began late last month and the military high court is expected to issue its ruling no later than 1 September 2025.