

21 December 2016

DRC: Nelly Mbangou receives death threats

On 19 December 2016, human rights defender Ms **Nelly Mbangou** received the latest in a series of death threats via phone call and text message from an unknown number/sender.

[Nelly Mbangou](#) is a human rights defender working on women's rights and children's rights in North Kivu. She is the coordinator of **Help and Action for Peace - Aide et Action pour la Paix (AAP)**, and is a leader amongst women human rights defenders in her community in North Kivu. In addition to their work for women's and children's rights, Help and Action for Peace work on good governance, conflict resolution of land rights disputes, and environmental and natural resources protection in the region. As issues of land rights and environmental protection often disproportionately impact women, Help and Action for Peace links these diverse issues together to positively impact the human rights situation in North Kivu.

On 17 December 2016, Nelly Mbangou received the first text message from an unknown number stating, *"I am a killer, you have to know that I was paid to kill you or your husband, Jean Paul, in order to save yourself, send at least \$5000, today. If you don't want to, one of you will die"*. According to her colleagues, on 18 December 2016, she received three more text messages from the same number with further death threats.

On 19 December 2016, she received another message declaring that this was her last chance to save her life and the life of her husband. The unidentified sender said, *"...to kill a person is just a joke for me"*. That same day, she received a call from the same number. She filed a complaint at the prosecutor's office requesting that the mobile company, Airtel, investigate and identify the sender. Following this, Nelly Mbangou and her family were forced to go into hiding.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned for the safety of human rights defender Nelly Mbangou, and believes the death threats to be in retaliation for her legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights. Front Line Defenders recognizes that the death threats against Nelly Mbangou are part of a larger [pattern](#) of harassment and threats targeting human rights defenders in the DRC which follows in the wake of the assassination of [Marcel Tengezeza](#) and [Father Vincent Machozi](#) in the province of North Kivu this year. The climate for human rights defenders is precarious following President Kabila's refusal to leave the presidency in keeping with his two-term mandate.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the DRC to:

1. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Nelly Mbangou and her family;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the death threats against Nelly Mbangou, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible

to justice in accordance with international standards;

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the DRC are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.