

5 January 2017

DRC: Philippe Busimba subjected to death and kidnapping threats

On 4 January 2017, Mr **Philippe Busimba** learned that a member of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and his colleagues planned to travel to Goma in order to kidnap the human rights defender whom they have accused of threatening their interests through his field work.

[Philippe Busimba](#) is a human rights defender who has worked in civil society organisations in Goma, DRC since 2009. He currently works at **Civil Bridge**, an umbrella organisation that coordinates 77 local organisations in a coalition. Civil Bridge works for peace and development in North Kivu, and most recently Philippe Busimba was documenting cases of human rights violations in Rutshuru, including instances of exploitation and harassment of the local population by the FARDC. Furthermore, he had uncovered instances of collaboration in acts of harassment, intimidation, and exploitation of the local population around the Virunga National Park by some members of the FARDC and members of the Democratic Forces for the liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a Rwandan rebel group based in the east of the DRC.

On 4 January 2017, Philippe Busimba and his colleagues received word from members of FARDC that one of their members, named Suleiman, and a number of his colleagues planned to rent a car and travel to Goma to kidnap him. They sought to do so as he was threatening their interests in the North Kivu region, following his recent human rights monitoring work. Due to these threats, the human rights defender is currently in hiding.

Previously, in late December 2016, Philippe Busimba was subject to threats and harassment from the FARDC and FDLR. On 19 December 2016, while the human rights defender was away from his home, three unidentified armed men arrived at his house, found his family inside, and then fired three shots in the general direction of the house. After the incident, FARDC military members on general patrol arrived and the three armed men fled. On 26 December 2016, a member of the the National Intelligence Agency (ANR) was reportedly visited by Suleiman, and during the visit he outlined threats against Philippe Busimba. The member of ANR passed along the details of the threats to Philippe Busimba. On 28 December 2016, in a chance physical meeting in a busy public space, Suleiman confronted Philippe Busimba and threatened that he “would deal with him” at some point. Additionally, Philippe Busimba has received calls from a man who claims to be a member of the FDLR and who has been paid to kill him, and in order to save his life, the caller stated that Philippe Busimba would need to pay \$1500.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned for the safety of human rights defender Philippe Busimba, and believes the death, kidnapping and extortion threats to be in retaliation for his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights. Front Line Defenders recognizes that the death threats against Philippe Busimba 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 Tengeneza](#) and [Father Vincent Machozi](#) in the province of North Kivu this year.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in DRC to:

1. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Philippe Busimba;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the death and kidnapping threats against Philippe Busimba, 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 DRC are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.