

25 January 2021

Democratic Republic of Congo: arbitrary arrest and detention of woman human rights defender Sinzeri Nabeza Jolie

On 22 January 2021, woman human rights defender **Sinzeri Nabeza Jolie** was arrested by Minembwe police officers just after a preparatory meeting for a peaceful march against discrimination against women and girls with disabilities had taken place. The woman human rights defender remains in detention at the Central Minembwe police station, and is accused of “inciting public disorder, incitement to hatred and disobedience”.

[Sinzeri Nabeza Jolie](#) is a woman human rights defender and member of SOS HANDICAP, an organisation created by disabled women to defend and protect the human rights of women and girls living with disabilities and to promote a fair world for all. SOS HANDICAP is located in the Fizi territory, in the south of Sud-Kivu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo. Sinzeri Nabeza Jolie is a disability rights defender and has a disability on her left leg. She is in charge of the monitoring and reporting of human rights violations and has been working with SOS HANDICAP for two years.

On 22 January, woman human rights defender Sinzeri Nabeza Jolie was arrested at the offices of SOS HANDICAP in Minembwe, where she and other members of the organisation had just held the preparatory meeting for a peaceful march to denounce the physical attack of a fifteen year old disabled girl by unknown individuals in Minembwe on 10 January 2021. After the meeting had finished, police entered the meeting room, causing the staff of SOS HANDICAP to disperse, and subsequently woman human rights defender Sinzeri Nabeza Jolie was arrested. According to her colleagues, the woman human rights defender was physically assaulted and injured during her arrest. Sinzeri Nabeza Jolie is currently being detained at the Minembwe police station. Since her arrest she has not had access to medical treatment which she requires to treat injuries she obtained during her arrest. Sinzeri Nabeza Jolie has yet to be brought before a judge nor has she had access to a lawyer. A court hearing has been scheduled for Wednesday 27 January 2021.

This is not the first time the woman human rights defender has faced reprisals for her human rights work. On 14 January 2021 Sinzeri Nabeza Jolie was attacked by unknown individuals at her home. She has also received several threatening anonymous phone-calls during which unknown individuals told her to stop monitoring and documenting human rights violations committed against disabled women and girls by security forces and armed groups.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned about the arbitrary arrest and detention of woman human rights defender Sinzeri Nabeza Jolie as it believes that she is being targeted solely as a result of her peaceful and legitimate human rights work.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Democratic Republic of Congo to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release woman human rights defender Sinzeri Nabeza Jolie, as it is believed that her arrest is directly motivated by her peaceful and legitimate human rights work;
2. Strongly condemn the physical assault and ill-treatment the woman human rights defender Sinzeri Nabeza Jolie was subject to during her arrest and in detention;
3. Ensure that Sinzeri Nabeza Jolie has access to a lawyer and take all necessary measures to guarantee her physical and psychological integrity and security while in detention;

4. Guarantee in all circumstances that disabled human rights defenders and all human rights defenders in Democratic Republic of Congo are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including harassment and threats.

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