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Cameroon: Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna receives death threats, while his brother is abducted and tortured

On 26 May 2019, human rights defender Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna received a death threat via a call from an unknown number. This is the latest in a series of threats and intimidation attempts that Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna has faced since late 2015 in relation to his human rights work in Bamenda, in the Northwest region of Cameroon. The most recent threats are linked to his work around a report published by the Cameroon National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF), confirming human rights violations perpetrated by the businessman Baba Danpullo.

[Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna](#) is a human rights defender who works as a legal representative for the organisation Organic Farming for Gorillas (OFFGO) and for its founder, human rights defender Jan Cappelle. OFFGO was founded in the Northwest region in 2015 to work on issues of land and environmental rights, farming, and for the protection of the Cross River gorilla, a critically endangered species that lives in the forests between Cameroon and Nigeria. In the course of their work, OFFGO has monitored the status of land holdings and land grabs in the Northwest, including the alleged land encroachment on small scale farmers' lands by Baba Danpullo, who operates tea plantations and cattle ranches in Northwest Cameroon.

In 2016, OFFGO's founder, Jan Cappelle, was expelled from Cameroon to his home country, Belgium, an incident that the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF) found was likely due to his human rights work. Furthermore, the NCHRF found that due process was not followed in his expulsion. Since 2016, multiple complaints have been submitted by international and local organisations and individuals to the national government and the NCHRF, calling for investigations into Jan Cappelle's expulsion, and the ongoing land conflicts between farmers and associates of Baba Danpullo in the Northwest region. Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna has served as OFFGO's legal representative throughout this period, and has worked to maintain pressure on the NCHRF to investigate complaints and to implement recommendations published in their recent reports, including those concerning Jan Cappelle's case.

On 16 May 2019, two unidentified men forcibly entered Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna's house, and abducted his younger brother. They left the house on a motorbike and after a while, stopped in an area in Bamenda known as Up Station, where they blindfolded him. Afterwards, they drove for another 30-40 minutes. The abductors then stopped in an area unknown to Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna's brother and removed his blindfold. They forced him into a large container where they tortured him for more than two hours by beating him and using hot metal to burn his skin. As a result, he has a broken ankle and wounds on his back and feet.

After the abduction, Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna and his family called his brother multiple times. At one point, one of the abductors picked up the phone and told the family members that Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna needed to drop Jan Cappelle's case, which is currently in court. Before leaving Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna's brother in a different area, the kidnappers told him that that this incident was the last warning for the human rights defender. They also revealed that they were monitoring the movements of Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna's wife and children, and that they were planning to kidnap them. They further threatened to kill him if he reported the incident to the authorities.

The recent incidents form part of a pattern of threats and intimidation attempts against Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna and OFFGO members which started in 2015 and has recently escalated, following the publication of the NCHRF report confirming OFFGO's findings concerning land grabbing and human rights violations in the Northwest region. These incidents come in a context of harassment

and threats committed against human rights defenders in western Cameroon in reprisal for their work on land, environmental, and indigenous peoples' rights.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the death threats received by Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna and the recent abduction and torture of his brother, as it believes that they are solely motivated by his legitimate activities in defence of human rights. Front Line Defenders recognises these threats as part of an effort to clamp down on human rights defenders working for land and environmental rights in Northwest Cameroon.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Cameroon to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the death threats against Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the abduction and torture of Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna's brother, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna as well as of the members of his family;
4. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Cameroon and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

Front Line Defenders respectfully reminds you that the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, recognises the legitimacy of the activities of human rights defenders, their right to freedom of association and to carry out their activities without fear of reprisals. We would particularly draw your attention to Article 11: "*Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to the lawful exercise of his or her occupation or profession (...)*," and to Article 12 (2): "*The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threat, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration.*"

Please inform us of any actions that may be taken with regard to the above case.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Anderson

Executive Director