

6 November 2019

## Cote d'Ivoire: Human rights defender Konan Yao Hubert on trial

On 30 October 2019, a closed hearing was conducted at the Tribunal of First Instance in Bouaké to try the case of human rights defender **Konan Yao Hubert** who has been charged with “incitement and disturbance of public order” and “assault and battery of gendarmes on duty”. The human rights defender was arrested on 4 August 2019 in relation to a protest that he organised with his community against the establishment of a nearby gold mine. Konan Yao Hubert was arrested at the bus station in Djékanou by police officers who did not present a warrant at the time of arrest.

**Konan Yao Hubert** is a student, journalist and blogger based in Abidjan. Upon learning that the residents of N'da-kouassikro, his home village in the sub-prefecture of Djékanou, had not been informed of their rights concerning a planned gold mine, he began focusing his advocacy efforts in the region. He now works with the community to sensitise them to their rights and to teach them about how to defend those rights peacefully through advocacy with authorities, including by writing and sending petitions.

On 3 August 2019, Konan Yao Hubert helped his community stage a peaceful protest in N'da-kouassikro against the opening of the gold mine, operated by the company Mondial Mines. Some protesters became violent when police attempted to arrest Konan Yao Hubert, who police officers had identified as the leader of the protest. Konan Yao Hubert remained peaceful throughout the entire protest and the police left the protest before they were able to arrest him. The following day Konan Yao Hubert went to the bus station as he planned to return to Abidjan to resume his studies. When police officers came to arrest him at the bus station in Djékanou, the human rights defender resisted arrest because the officers did not present an arrest warrant. When he resisted, they physically attacked him. Since his arrest, Konan Yao Hubert has been held in preventive detention at the civil prison in Bouaké where he is being held in poor conditions.

The community has taken a stand against the planned gold mining activities because of the company's failure to adhere to the requirements set out in their mining permit as well as their concerns over environmental consequences such as the pollution of local rivers. On 16 July 2019, the Ministry of Mines and Geology decided to suspend the activities of the company until it conducted an environmental impact assessment and gained the consent of the community. Mondial Mines has yet to adhere to the suspension and continues to engage in illegal mining activities.

Front Line Defenders is concerned by the detention of human rights defender Konan Yao Hubert and the charges he faces as it believes he is being targeted solely as a result of his legitimate work defending human rights.

### Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Cote d'Ivoire to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Konan Yao Hubert, and drop all charges against him, as Front Line Defenders believes that he is being held solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of his community's land rights;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into allegations of police brutality;

3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Konan Yao Hubert, and the community of N'da-kouassikro defending their land rights;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Cote d'Ivoire are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including harassment and threats.

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 attention to Article 6 (c): *“Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others: (c) To study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters”* 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, threats, 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