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## **Democratic Republic of Congo: Arbitrary detention of three human rights defenders and a journalist in Mongala Province**

On 28 May 2020, human rights defenders **Taylor Engonga**, **Peter Tetunabo** and **Yannick Mokanga** were arbitrarily arrested by the bodyguards of the Provincial Minister of the Interior at Bumba, in Mongala Province. The defenders are currently detained in prison 22 at Lisala, chief town of Mongala province.

Taylor Engonga, Peter Tetunabo and Yannick Mokanga are human rights defenders and members of [MPO NA EKOLO](#) (For the nation), a movement encouraging citizens to fight for the promotion and respect of human rights. This citizen movement advocates for social justice and respect for democracy, and denounces corruption and insecurity through demonstrations and petitions.

On 28 May 2020, the three defenders were arbitrarily arrested by the bodyguards of the Provincial Minister of the Interior, and detained at Bumba prison. On 30 May, they were transferred to prison 22 at Lisala by the provincial governor's close guard, where they remain in detention. The defenders only had access to their lawyer on 29 May.

The human rights defenders believe their arbitrary arrest is in reprisal for their legitimate and peaceful human rights activities. On 11 May 2020, the citizen movement MPO NA EKOLO organised a sit-in in front of the Bumba territory office to request the departure of the Governor of Mongala. On the same day, members of the organisation issued a memorandum denouncing the mismanagement of the province and the poor provision for the social and economic needs of the population. At the moment of the arrest on 28 May, Taylor Engonga, Peter Tetunabo and Yannick Mokanga were on their way to meet members of the community of notables of Mongala to request their support for the departure of the governor of the province.

Taylor Engonga, Peter Tetunabo and Yannick Mokanga have been detained in the same cell as **Fabrice Ngani**, a journalist and host of the program entitled " Bonjour Bumba" broadcast on the radio station La Voix de Bumba FM (The Voice of Bumba FM). [Fabrice Ngani](#) was arrested on 26 May 2020 at approximately 8 a.m. by police officers, and taken to the provincial governor's residence where he reported being assaulted and detained for more than 6 hours. He was then transferred to Bumba prison on the same day. The journalist was detained with the three human rights defenders and transferred to Lisala Prison 22 where they are still being held. They haven't been informed of the charges brought against them and haven't appeared before a judge.

The journalist believes his arbitrary arrest is in reprisal for his legitimate and peaceful exercise of freedom of expression, denouncing the mismanagement of the province through his radio program. On the same day of his arrest, several radio stations including Radio Mongala, the Voice of Bumba FM, Bumba Rural Radio and Radio Mwana Mboka, were banned from broadcasting until further notice in a statement issued on 26 May 2020 by the Governor of Mongala Province Crispin Ngbundu Malengo and the President of the Provincial Assembly Floribert Gala.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned by the arbitrary detention of the four human rights defenders Taylor Engonga, Peter Tetunabo, Yannick Mokanga and Fabrice Ngani as it strongly believes that it is directly linked to their peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights and their exercise of freedom of expression.

## **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in DRC to:**

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Taylor Engonga, Peter Tetunabo, Yannick Mokanga and Fabrice Ngani, and cease all further harassment towards them, as Front Line Defenders believes that they have been arbitrarily arrested and are being held solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Taylor Engonga, Peter Tetunabo, Yannick Mokanga and Fabrice Ngani, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
3. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the beating of Fabrice Ngani, with a view to ensuring his protection and release, publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
4. 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, including judicial harassment.

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