

15 May 2020

Democratic Republic of Congo: Disappearance of human rights defender Rams Wasolela

On 12 May 2020, human rights defender **Rams Wasolela** is reported to have disappeared in Lubumbashi, Haut-Katanga province. His disappearance coincides with several social media posts the defender made, denouncing the insecurity in Lubumbashi and calling on the population to demonstrate.

[Rams Wasolela](#) is a human rights defender and national coordinator of the citizen's movement *La Voix du Peuple* (The Voice of the People). This movement mobilises citizens to claim their rights peacefully and promotes respect for the law through demonstrations and petitions.

According to the defender's family, Rams Wasolela left his home on 12 May 2020 at approximately 2pm and was headed towards the city centre for groceries. His family and friends have not heard from him since, nor have they been able to reach his phone, which is turned off. Rams Wasolela's family filed a report of his disappearance at the Lubumbashi police station, but they have not yet been notified as to whether an investigation has been opened.

Rams Wasolela's family believes his disappearance is linked to his human rights activities, denouncing the climate of insecurity in Lubumbashi. The security situation in the province of Haut-Katanga, and particularly in the city of Lubumbashi, has deteriorated since April 2020, with numerous thefts and burglaries occurring. On social media networks, Rams Wasolela criticised the inability of provincial authorities and law enforcement agencies to guarantee the security of citizens, calling on the population to demonstrate.

Friends of Rams Wasolela say that he told them that he had received several death threats from unknown numbers and threats in the comments below his posts on social media, in the week leading up to his disappearance.

Rams Wasolela was previously arrested arbitrarily on 16 December 2019 and detained for four days at the National Intelligence Agency (ANR) in Lubumbashi. He was arrested by officers of the university of Lubumbashi police force for being in possession of a copy of a letter from the organization La Lucha. The letter was addressed to the mayor of the city of Lubumbashi, regarding a cancelled march to be held on 15 December 2019 to protest the increased insecurity in the province of Haut-Katanga. Rams Wasolela was brought before a judge and granted release on 20 December 2019.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned regarding the disappearance of Rams Wasolela, as it believes his disappearance is linked to his peaceful and legitimate human rights work and his exercising of his freedom of expression.

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

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the disappearance of human rights defender Rams Wasolela, with a view to ensuring his protection and release, publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;

2. 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 harassment and threats.

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