

26 June 2019

Cameroon: Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna receives death threat, while OFFGO office is targeted

On 19 June 2019, a group of unidentified men wearing military-style fatigues came in a truck to the headquarters of Organic Farming for Gorillas (OFFGO) located in the Tudig community village chief's compound in Northwest Cameroon. They shot their guns into the air and proceeded to plant grenades in the path leading to the compound. Three days after the incident, on 22 June 2019, Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna's wife received a phone call where an anonymous caller told her "We shall cut Elvis' head off".

[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, a tea plantation and cattle ranch operator in Northwest Cameroon.

During the attack on 19 June 2019, the unidentified perpetrators shot their guns into the air, causing the villagers who were in the area to flee into the surrounding bush. Following the incident, the villagers approached the pathway where the attackers had planted the grenades, and took emergency measures to ensure that no one was hurt. The incident has been reported to the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF) which is in charge of implementing the findings of its investigations based on the reports that Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna and OFFGO have submitted about human rights violations in the Northwest region. This is the first time the Tudig community and the OFFGO headquarters have been targeted with such a violent attack since 2017. In 2016 and 2017, the community faced several security incidents including the destruction of homes, property, and livestock.

Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna has been the target of [death threats](#) in the past, however, the death threat made against him via a phone call on 22 June 2019 differed from past incidents in its explicit character. Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna's wife immediately hung up after hearing the threat made by an anonymous caller. She has not received any further threatening phone calls since.

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 violent attack on the OFFGO headquarters, and the unequivocal death threat made against Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna, as it believes that they are solely motivated by his legitimate activities in defence of human rights. Front Line Defenders recognises these incidents 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. Strongly condemn the attack on the OFFGO headquarters, and the death threats against Elvis Brown Luma Mukuna;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attack on the OFFGO headquarters, and 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;
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. Ensure that the recommendations from the NCHRF reports concerning land grabbing and human rights violations in the Northwest region are implemented without interference or limitation;
5. 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.

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