

24 February 2020

Madagascar: human rights defender Thomas Razafindremaka detained and charged

On 16 February 2020, human rights defender **Thomas Razafindremaka** was arrested by the Gendarmerie of Ihosy. He is charged with extortion, usurpation of office and fraud.

[Thomas Razafindremaka](#) is a human rights defender fighting against corruption in the Ihorombe region of Madagascar. He is the president of "Gny To tsy mba Zainy" (GTZ) and leader of the human rights commission of Rohy Madagasikara, organisations fighting against corruption, and promoting the rule of law and good governance. He is also a member of the Ihorombe Regional Civil Society Organisations Platform (Pfnoscm Madagascar).

On 16 February 2020, Thomas Razafindremaka was arrested by the Gendarmerie of Ihosy. He is currently detained at the Ihosy prison, and is charged with extortion, usurpation of office and fraud. The human rights defender believes he has been targeted due to his work denouncing corruption and abuse of power by members of the judiciary and the National Gendarmerie in the Ihorombe region and the surrounding areas. The first hearing of his case is scheduled for 17 March 2020 at the Ihosy Tribunal.

In 2019, Thomas Razafindremaka filed a complaint to the authority mandated with fighting corruption within the National Gendarmerie. The complaint concerned corruption and torture allegedly perpetrated by the Superintendent of Gendarmerie of Tritriva, Soamatasy District. He also lodged a complaint against the President of the District Electoral Commission and the deputy candidate of Ihosy, concerning alleged corruption during the legislative elections of 27 May 2019.

In a letter sent on 6 January 2020 to the Ministry of Justice's Directorate for the Promotion of Integrity, Thomas Razafindremaka raised concerns about the work ethic of several employees of the Ihosy court, including the investigating judge, the president of the court and the prosecutor. He also questioned the length of the judges' mandate.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned about the detention of, and charges against, Thomas Razafindremaka as it strongly believes that they are directly linked to his peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights, in particular his activities denouncing corruption.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Madagascar to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Thomas Razafindremaka 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 human rights;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Thomas Razafindremaka, 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. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Madagascar 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.