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Madagascar: Human rights defender Jeannot Randriamanana sentenced to two years in prison

On 10 May 2022, human rights defender **Jeannot Randriamanana** was granted provisional release from Maison Centrale de Mananjary where he was detained. On 17 March 2022, Jeannot Randriamanana was sentenced to two years in prison. The human rights defender was charged with “defamation and humiliation of members of Parliament and public servants” under Article 20 of the Cyber Criminality Law 2014-006 and “identity fraud” under Article 258 of the Penal Code. The human rights defender’s lawyers have filed an appeal and a hearing has been scheduled for 14 June 2022.

[Jeannot Randriamanana](#) is a human rights defender and the communications officer for the Independent Observatory of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Madagascar (Observatoire Indépendant des Droits Economiques, Sociaux et Culturels à Madagascar - OIDESCM). The human rights defender works to protect the right to information and promotes good governance. He has been posting on his social media about the poor state of school infrastructure in the district of Nosy Varika since December 2021.

On 10 May 2022, the Court of Appeals upheld the ruling, however, Jeannot Randriamanana was granted provisional release from Maison Centrale de Mananjary, where he was detained since 2 March 2022. A second hearing on the appeal has been scheduled for 14 June 2022. Prior to his arrest, Jeannot Randriamanana had also made public posts on his social media denouncing anonymous threats he had received in December 2021 in connection with his work in the defence of human rights.

On 5 and 23 February 2022 cyclones Batsirai and Emnati hit Madagascar. They resulted in landfalls in the districts of Nosy Varika and Mananjary, prompting a global call for international humanitarian aid. At the end of February 2022, Jeannot Randriamanana, started to denounce on social media the fact that the local population had not received any of the humanitarian aid promised by the local authorities.

On 2 March 2022, the public prosecutor presented charges against Jeannot Randriamanana and he was subsequently arrested and detained at the central prison of Mananjary on the same day. The human rights defender’s lawyers were not present when he was sentenced, and there was no evidence presented during the sentencing. The charges of defamation levied against him are related to social media posts the human rights defender made in February 2022 denouncing the alleged mismanagement and embezzlement of humanitarian aid for victims of the cyclones.

On 17 March 2022, Jeannot Randriamanana was sentenced to two years in prison on the charges of “defamation and humiliation of members of Parliament and public servants” under Article 20 of the Cyber Criminality Law and “identity fraud” under Article 258 of the Penal Code. On 21 March 2022, the human rights defender’s lawyers filed an appeal with the Court of Appeal of Fianarantsoa.

Front Line Defenders is concerned by the sentencing and detention of human rights defender Jeannot Randriamanana, as it believes he is being targeted solely because of his legitimate and

peaceful work in defence of human rights. It is also extremely concerned that the human rights defender's sentencing did not follow due process, and urges the authorities in Madagascar to grant Jeannot Randriamanana unfettered access to his lawyers in all future proceedings.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of Madagascar to:

1. Immediately drop all charges against Jeannot Randriamanana and quash his conviction as Front Line Defenders believes that he has been targeted solely as a result of his legitimate human rights work;
2. Ensure that Jeannot's physical and psychological integrity are protected and guaranteed in accordance with international standards;
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.