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RSCDA-IO
Research and Support Center for
Development Alternatives - Indian Ocean
Lot VF-60, Mahamasina Nord
Antananarivo 101 - MADAGASCAR



CRAAD-OI
Centre de Recherches et d'Appui pour les
Alternatives de Développement - Océan Indien
Tel (+261 0) 326034361/349661564

**OBSERVATOIRE INDEPENDANT DES DROITS ECONOMIQUES,
SOCIAUX ET CULTURELS DE MADAGASCAR**

JOINT STATEMENT

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Madagascar: Authorities must quash the verdict against the whistle-blower and teacher Jeannot Randriamanana

Malagasy authorities must immediately and unconditionally release the human rights defender and public-school teacher Jeannot Randriamanana, quash the verdict and drop all charges against him as he is being detained solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression in denouncing, in February on his social media, the alleged mismanagement and embezzlement by public authorities of humanitarian aid for the population impacted by cyclones Batsirai and Emnati in the district of Nosy Varika.

[Cyclones Batsirai and Emnati](#) hit Madagascar on 5 and 23 February 2022, respectively. They resulted in human and material loss 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 alleged mismanagement and embezzlement by public authorities of humanitarian aid meant for people impacted by the two cyclones.

On 2 March, the Public Prosecutor brought charges against Jeannot Randriamanana for defamation and humiliation of members of Parliament and public servants. He was also charged with identity fraud, being accused of fraudulent use of the function of a journalist, solely for having shared information on his social media, as he never claimed to be a journalist. Jeannot was arrested on the same day, and, since then, he has been detained in the Maison Centrale de Mananjary.

On 17 March, the Criminal Court of Mananjary sentenced Jeannot Randriamanana to two years of imprisonment for “defamation and humiliation of members of Parliament and public servants” (under article 20 of the 2014 Law 2014-006) and identity fraud (article 258 of the Penal Code).

On 21 March, Jeannot Randriamanana’s lawyers filed an appeal against his sentence. The Court of Appeal of Fianarantsoa will rule on the appeal on 10 May 2022.



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Background information

Jeannot Randriamanana is a 38-year-old public secondary school teacher living and working in Mananjary, in the region of Vatovavy, in the center east of Madagascar. He is a father of four children aged 18, 14, 9 and 4 years old. In addition to his work as a public school teacher, he is also supports the work of the local branch of the Independent Observatory of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Madagascar (Observatoire Indépendant des Droits Economiques, Sociaux et Culturels de Madagascar - OIDESCM) coordinated by the Association Research and Support Center for Development Alternatives – Indian Ocean (RSCDA-IA). He is passionate about human rights, mainly concerned with the right to information and good governance. He has been posting on his social media about the poor state of school infrastructure in the district of Nosy Varika. In December 2021, he exposed that he had been harassed and intimidated for denouncing cases of corruption on his social media account.

The judicial persecution against Jeannot is part of a pattern of harassment of activists and repression of freedom of expression and the right to freedom of information in Madagascar. In recent years, the Malagasy authorities have increased the repression against whistle-blowers and dissenting voices. For instance, the judicial prosecution against Ravo Ramasomanana, Raleva, Thomas Razafindremaka, Jean-Louis Bérard, and Clovis Razafimalala, despite their contributions to revealing and denouncing serious allegations of corruption and human rights violations. Many people in Madagascar, potential whistle-blowers in their respective fields, risk unjust treatment for exercising their human rights. Whistleblowing is integral for any country aspiring to transparency, accountability and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Therefore, the undersigned organizations are calling for the government of Madagascar to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Jeannot Randriamanana, quash the verdict against him and drop all charges against him as he is being detained solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and the right to freedom of information.
- Ensure that Malagasy human rights defenders and whistle-blowers are not detained under trumped-up charges for exposing and denouncing cases of corruption, and to accelerate the process of adopting the law on the protection of human rights defenders and activists, including whistle-blowers. The adoption of this bill would be a clear sign that Madagascar is committed to human rights and the rule of law, and is willing to establish true legal protection for those who through their actions enable the country to step up its fight against corruption.
- Take the necessary steps to end the intimidation, harassment and attacks on whistle-blowers, human rights defenders and activists, and recognise that whistle-blowers' right to freedom of expression includes the right to expose and denounce cases of corruption, to provide evidence and to inform the general public.



Amnesty International

CRAAD-OI / Observatoire Indépendant des Droits Economiques, Sociaux et Culturels de Madagascar (OIDESCM)

Transparency International - Initiative Madagascar (TI-MG)