

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS ARBITRARILY DETAINED

Congolese human rights activists, **Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana** and **Christ Dongui**, are being arbitrary detained in connection to their human rights work and criticism of the government. In March, they were both arrested in front of their house by unidentified men, forced into vehicles and taken to the Central Intelligence and Documentation Center. They were eventually presented to a prosecutor and charged with breach of State security and sent to Brazzaville central prison where they remain held in pre-trial detention solely for peacefully exercising their human rights. They must be immediately and unconditionally released.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Minister of Justice

Ange Aimé Bininga

Ministre de la justice et des droits humains et de la promotion des peuples autochtones

Avenue Charles de Gaulle, B.P.1375, Brazzaville, Congo

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Your Excellency,

I am writing to you to express concern about the cases of human right activists **Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana** and **Christ Dongui** who are currently held in pre-trial detention at the Brazzaville central prison, in the capital. Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana is the president of the movement M22 and coordinator of the Congolese Platform of NGOs of Human Rights and Democracy, and Christ Dongui, the vice-president of the association Ras le Bol. They were both arrested in front of their house by unidentified men, on 11 March and 25 March respectively, and taken to the Central Intelligence and Documentation Center (CID) in Brazzaville. During their detention at the CID, they were denied access to their families and lawyers. On 9 April, they were brought before a prosecutor and charged with breach of State security. They were sent to Brazzaville central prison where they remain held in pre-trial detention. The date of their trial is still unknown.

Ras le Bol advocated for fair and transparent elections ahead of the 21 March presidential poll. On 24 March, the day before his arrest, he attended a press conference to denounce alleged irregularities in the presidential poll. Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana is a well-known critic of the regime. He participated in the organization of a demonstration calling for "an inclusive national dialogue" between the government, the opposition parties and civil society organizations and the release of political prisoners on 6 March. The demonstration was banned by authorities. Therefore, Amnesty International is concerned that Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana and Christ Dongui's arrest and detention are linked to their peaceful human rights and political activism which are in accordance with the peaceful exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana, who is 77 years old, suffers from high blood pressure that makes him more vulnerable to Covid-19. It is thus even more important that the authorities comply with Resolution 466 – 2020 of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which calls states to release human rights defenders as part of wider measures to reduce overcrowding in prisons and other places of detention.

In this regard, I urge Your Excellency to immediately and unconditionally release Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana and Christ Dongui who are being detained solely in connection to their peaceful activism. Pending their release, the two activists must have regular and unfettered access to their lawyer and families and be protected from torture and other ill-treatment.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Arrest and detention of those peacefully exercising their human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression, and freedom of peaceful assembly, and crackdown on peaceful dissent are contrary to international human rights standards. Although the CID is empowered to arrest and hold individuals in custody, it is compelled to act in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Code. In article 48, the Code provides that people should be presented to a prosecutor within 72 hours of their arrest, which can be extended by 48 hours with a written decision from the prosecutor. This was not followed for Alexandre Dzabana and Christ Dongui who were held for 29 and 15 days respectively before being presented to the prosecutor. The lack of legal basis to detain them renders their detention at the CID illegal and further arbitrary. The Republic of Congo hence violates its own Constitution which provides in its art. 9 that “[...] Nobody can be arbitrarily accused, arrested or detained”. The country also contravenes the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has determined that those detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights must be immediately released. The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights has called on all member states, in its resolution 466 on prisons and conditions of detention in Africa, to release different groups of detainees amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, including human rights defenders, “in order to reduce overcrowding in prisons and curb the spread of the Coronavirus”.

Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana and Christ Dongui’s detention comes amidst a general crackdown on all who denounced the management and governance that worsened the situation of economic and social rights including those who did not comply with the Covid-19 restriction measures. More information can be found in Amnesty International’s 2021 report, [On the back of the crisis. Violations of the right to health and repression of economic and social rights defenders in the Republic of Congo.](#)

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: French

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 13 August 2021

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Alexandre Ibacka Dzabana (He/Him/His); Christ Dongui (He/Him/His)