

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED CARTOONIST FACING TRUMPED UP CHARGES

An Equatorial Guinean cartoonist and activist, Ramón Esono Ebalé, whose work has been critical of the government has been arrested and detained. He is being held at the Black Beach prison in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. He has not been charged yet.

The 39 year old Equatorial Guinean cartoonist and activist, **Ramón Esono Ebalé**, was arrested in the capital of the country, Malabo on 16 September. He was leaving a restaurant at around 7pm in the company of two Spanish nationals when state security agents arrested them. The three were handcuffed, had their mobiles phones confiscated and then were taken to the Office against Terrorism and Dangerous Activities which is located at the Central Police Station. Once there, they were questioned by more than a dozen security agents. After answering some questions regarding their reason for being in the country and their relationship with Ramón, the two Spanish nationals were released. However, Ramón remained at the police station being questioned about his cartoons that criticised Equatorial Guinea's President Teodoro Obiang and his government. The security agents warned Ramón that his cartoons depicting the president and his sharing them on the internet could be considered defamatory.

On 19 September, national TV news stations reported that Ramón had been detained accused of heading an organisation involved in money laundering and counterfeiting money. Even though Ramón was presented in court on 20 September, he has yet to be charged. His colleagues, friends and family believe that Ramón's detention and the accusation against him are the government's strategy to discredit his work. After the hearing he was sent to the Black Beach prison in Malabo where he is being held in preventive detention.

Ramón is a cartoonist and activist who uses his work to critique the human rights situation in the country. In 2014 he published the cartoon book *La pesadilla de Obiang* (Obiang's Nightmare) denouncing amongst others the human rights abuses of the state, the wealth inequality in the country and the fact that people fear speaking out against the government. He also used to publish critical cartoons against the President and other members of the government in his blog *Las Locuras de Jamón y Queso*, which was forcibly shut down in 2013. He now publishes his cartoons on social media.

Ramón, who has been living abroad for several years, had returned to his country on 29 August to renew his passport. He was in the country waiting for his new passport to be processed.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to immediately release and drop all the charges against Ramón Esono Ebalé;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that the right to freedom of expression is respected in Equatorial Guinea;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure that human rights defenders and activists can carry out their legitimate work with total freedom and without fear of being prosecuted or threatened.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 NOVEMBER 2017 TO:

President of the Republic of Equatorial
Guinea

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo
Palacio Presidencial
Avenida de la Libertad
Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

Salutation: His Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

And copies to:

Director of the Black Beach Prison
Calle de Kenia,
Malabo,
Equatorial Guinea

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In Equatorial Guinea human rights defenders and activists are usually harassed, arbitrary arrested and detained for their work. All these attacks are meant to intimidate them and force them into silence.

Equatorial Guinea is a country with a serious record of human rights violations, including violations to freedom of expression and freedom of association.

Name: Ramón Esono Ebalé

Gender m/f: m

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