

URGENT ACTION

CARTOONIST STILL DETAINED WITHOUT CHARGE

Ramón Esono Ebalé, an Equatorial Guinean cartoonist and activist, has spent over 50 days in prison without being formally charged. His continued detention is related to his artistic work which has been critical of the government. The Cartoonists Rights Network International has awarded him the 2017 Award for Courage in Editorial Cartooning.

Ramón Esono Ebalé, a cartoonist and activist from Equatorial Guinea, continues to be detained without charge at the Malabo prison of Black Beach. He was detained on 16 September after being arrested while leaving a restaurant in Malabo. He has been accused of heading an organisation involved in money laundering and counterfeiting money.

On 9 October, Ramón's lawyers submitted a request to the court asking for a hearing with the prosecution witnesses in order to prove that they are giving false testimony, after which the Court could determine whether or not to charge Ramón. However, the court is yet to respond to the submission and his lawyers are concerned that this is a delaying tactic the authorities are using to keep Ramón in prison. If the court does not respond to the submission by 30 November, which is when the judicial year ends, then Ramón could be in prison until at least 16 January 2018 when the courts resume their sessions.

Ramón's continued detention is believed to be in connection with his art work which he uses to critique the human rights situation in the country.

According to family and friends who have been visiting him, Ramón is in good spirits and in good health despite being imprisoned. He has also been given access to a pen and paper which enable him to continue with his drawing. Some fellow prisoners have even asked him to make drawings of them.

The Cartoonists Rights Network International, on 2 November, announced that Ramón had been awarded with the '2017 Award for Courage in Editorial Cartooning'. This is an annual award given to a cartoonist or cartoonists who have exhibited great courage and self-sacrifice in the pursuit of their craft and in the exercise of free speech.

Please write immediately in Spanish or your own language:

- Urging the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Ramón Esono Ebalé as it appears he is detained solely in relation to his peaceful activism;
- Calling on them to ensure that the right to freedom of expression is respected in Equatorial Guinea;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders to work without fear of punishment, reprisal or intimidation.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 DECEMBER 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

And copies to:

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

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. This is the first update of UA 219/17. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr24/7135/2017/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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.

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.

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

Further information on UA: 219/17 Index: AFR 24/7391/2017 Issue Date: 6 November 2017