

URGENT ACTION

PRO-DEMOCRACY ACTIVIST DETAINED

On 17 April, pro-democracy activist Oumar Sylla, alias Foniké Mengué, was arrested outside his house in Conakry, Guinea, by Banditry Repression Brigade officers. Prior to his arrest, he spoke on a radio show during which he called for protests against the government's plans for constitutional change, which may change presidential term limits and allow Guinea's President Alpha Condé to be elected for a third term. He also accused members of the government and ruling party of killings, torture and other ill-treatment, and arbitrary detention. He was initially detained for one day in "Villa 40", the office of the General Intelligence Directorate, then transferred to the Judicial Police Directorate. On 24 April, he was charged with dissemination of false information.

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

Mamadou Lamine Fofana
Minister of Justice
BP: 564 Conakry
Guinea
Email: malafof74@gmail.com

Dear Minister,

*I am writing to you concerning **Oumar Sylla**, pro-democracy activist, deputy coordinator of pro-democracy movement Turn the Page Guinea and mobilisation coordinator of National Front for the Defence of the Constitution (FNDC in French), who was arrested outside his house in Conakry by Banditry Repression Brigade officers on 17 April. He was initially detained for one day in "Villa 40", the office of the General Intelligence Directorate, then transferred to the Judicial Police Directorate.*

On the morning of 17 April, Oumar Sylla participated by phone in the radio show "Grande Gueule" on Espace FM radio station. During his interview, he called on members of FNDC to prepare for the resumption of demonstrations against the government's plans for constitutional change, which may change presidential term limits and allow President Alpha Condé to be elected for a third term.

He also denounced the killings, torture, arbitrary detention and harassment of FNDC members in the city of Nzerekoré during Guinea's legislative elections on 22 March, and identified which members of the government, members of ruling party and local authorities he believed to be responsible for human rights violations.

On 24 April, Oumar Sylla was charged with "dissemination of false information". I believe the charge against Oumar Sylla and his arbitrary detention are attempts to silence him. He has been charged solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression.

In light of the above, I urge you to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Oumar Sylla and drop the charge against him;*
- Refrain from further arrests of individuals for simply exercising their right to freedom of expression;*
- End harassment against members of civil society;*
- Ensure that, pending his release, Oumar Sylla's conditions of detention are in line with international standards, including access to water, food and regular access to his family and lawyer. If contact visits are restricted due to Covid-19 preventive measures, they must be replaced with other means of communication, by phone, video call or emails, for example.*

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Parliamentary elections were held in Guinea on 22 March 2020 alongside a constitutional referendum. Amnesty International documented serious human rights violations committed by the defence and security forces in several cities across the country on 22 March and the days preceding and following. Security forces committed at least 12 unlawful killings in Conakry and near Mamou. In the city of Nzérékoré, clashes broke out on polling day and continued the next day. According to a statement from of Human Rights Organizations in Forested Guinea (Collectif des organisations de défense des droits de l'homme en Guinée forestière in French), at least 22 people were killed and 100 injured. The bodies were allegedly buried at night without the families of the victims being present. During the violence, several places of worship, including at least three churches, were destroyed and burned.

On 16 April, a presidential decree invited parliamentarians to elect the new parliament speaker on 22 April.

The National Front for the Defence of the Constitution (FNDC) is a coalition of non-governmental groups and opposition parties which boycotted the referendum. Since October 2019, FNDC has been organizing protests against the government's planned constitutional change. The new constitution would reset presidential term limits, allowing president Alpha Condé to be elected for a third term. The referendum could pave the way for his third term bid. It has also opposed the election of the new parliamentary speaker. The FNDC called for a "ville morte" (general strike) on 22 April throughout the country as a form of protest. This marked the suspension of their truce which they announced following the first Covid-19 cases in Guinea.

Leaders of pro-democracy movements and scores of protestors have been arrested and sentenced since 2019. On 22 October 2019, the Tribunal of Dixinn found Abdourahamane Sano, Alpha Soumah (alias Bill de Sam), Ibrahima Diallo, Bailo Barry and Sékou Koundouno guilty of "direct incitement to an unarmed gathering". Sano was sentenced to a year in prison and the others to six months. They were released on bail on 28 November 2019 pending their appeal.

On 7 March, Ibrahima Diallo and Sekou Koundono, pro-democracy activists of National Front for the Defence of the Constitution, were arrested in Conakry, Guinea. On the day prior to their arrest, they were spokespersons at a press conference during which they accused Commissioner Fabou Camara, director of the Central Direction of the Judicial Police, of phone tapping, torture and other ill-treatment. On 9 March, they were charged with trumped up charges of assault, assaulting a public officer and production and dissemination of data threatening public order and security. They were released on 13 March, but they still face charges and both remain under judicial supervision.

One case of Covid-19 was reported at Conakry prison on 28 April according to the National Health Security Agency.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: French

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: [9 June 2020]

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

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: [Oumar Sylla] (He/his)