

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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## **DRC: Release human rights defender Boniface Umpula immediately and unconditionally**

Authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) should immediately and unconditionally release Boniface Umpula, staff member of the Congolese human rights organization, Action contre l'impunité pour les droits de l'homme (ACIDH), arrested on 11 November 2014 after disseminating a press release.

Boniface Umpula was arrested in the Courthouse of Lubumbashi in Katanga Province while he was distributing a press release by the National Independent Union of Congo Magistrates (SYNAMAC) supporting the ongoing magistrates' strike regarding pay. He has reportedly been charged with "propagating false news" and "inciting subversion of state power." He was initially detained at the Courthouse of Lubumbashi before being transferred today to Kassapa prison.

The magistrates' strike began on 3 November 2014 and marks the continuation of industrial action over pay which first began in September 2011 before being suspended the same month following negotiations. The President of the Supreme Court subsequently banned trade union activities for magistrates in September 2011 in violation of Article 39 of the Congolese Constitution.

By arresting Boniface Umpula, the Congolese authorities have violated the right to seek, receive and impart information contrary to Article 21 of the Congolese Constitution, Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which DRC is party.

Throughout the magistrates strike, the authorities must allow magistrates, civil society organizations and other citizens to enjoy an unhindered right to seek, receive and impart information related to public affairs, including the strike itself.