

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST SENTENCED TO 3 YEAR IMPRISONMENT

On 10 June, Oumar Sylla (alias Foniké Mengué), a pro-democracy activist and mobilization coordinator for National Front for the Defence of the Constitution (FNDC in French), was sentenced by Conakry's Court of Appeal to three year imprisonment for "communication and dissemination of false information, violence and threat of death". He must be immediately and unconditionally released as he is being punished for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

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

Mr. Mory Doumbouya

Minister of Justice

BP: 564 Conakry

Email: maitredoumbouya@yahoo.com

Dear Minister,

*I am writing to you regarding the unlawful conviction of **Oumar Sylla (alias Foniké Mengué)**, a pro-democracy activist and mobilization coordinator for National Front for the Defence of the Constitution (FNDC), who has been sentenced to three years of imprisonment.*

Oumar Sylla was re-arrested in Conakry, the Guinean capital, on 29 September 2020 while mobilizing people to engage in a protest against President Condé's candidacy for the October 2020 presidential elections. On 28 January 2021, after four months of arbitrary detention, the Mafanco Court in Conakry sentenced him to 11 months in prison for "criminal participation in a gathering likely to disturb public order". His lawyers appealed the decision.

In an unexpected turn of events, on 10 June, Conakry's Court of Appeal sentenced Oumar Sylla to three year imprisonment for 'communication and dissemination of false information, violence and threat of death'- the same charges that were brought against Oumar Sylla during his first arrest in April 2020 but were dismissed by a judge on 27 August 2020, who subsequently ordered his release after 132 days of arbitrary detention.

I am concerned that Oumar Sylla has been convicted solely in connection to his pro-democracy activism with the FNDC. He has been targeted by the authorities and arbitrarily deprived of his liberty. He must be released immediately and unconditionally.

I am also deeply concerned about Oumar Sylla's health whilst in detention, which has severely deteriorated since his 14-day hunger strike in December 2020. He has had to be evacuated to hospital several times, the last time on 28 May. And in March 2021 he contracted Covid-19.

In light of the above, I call on you to:

- **Ensure that Oumar Sylla's conviction is overturned without delay, making sure it is in line with international law and standards and does not violate his right to freedom of expression; and he is released immediately and unconditionally;**
- **Ensure that, pending his release, Oumar Sylla's conditions of detention are in line with international standards, including access to adequate healthcare and regular access to his lawyers and family;**
- **End the harassment, intimidation and arrests of members of civil society and individuals solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 17 April 2020, Oumar Sylla was arrested in front of his house in Conakry, Guinea's capital. Prior to his arrest, Oumar Sylla participated by phone in the show "Grande Gueule" on Espace FM radio station. During his interview, he called on members of the FNDC to prepare for the resumption of demonstrations against the government's plans for constitutional change, which would change presidential term limits and allow President Alpha Condé to run for a third term in office. He also denounced the killings, torture, arbitrary detention and harassment of FNDC members. During the first day of trial, on 6 August 2020, the Prosecutor warned of the "serious risk for public order to release Oumar Sylla". On 27 August 2020, he was released after the judge dismissed all charges against him.

Oumar Sylla was re-arrested on 29 September 2020 while mobilizing against President Alpha Condé's candidacy for the October 2020 presidential election. Following the presidential election, protests - some of which were violent - erupted to contest the results. Security forces responded to the protests by using excessive force when carrying out operations in some neighbourhoods which resulted in deaths. According to Amnesty International, at least 16 people were shot dead between 18 and 24 October 2020.

On 31 October 2020, the General prosecutor of Conakry's Court of Appeal announced that 325 people had been arrested during the post-election protests where violence ensued. On 10 November 2020, the Dixinn district prosecutor announced that 78 people had been brought before a judge and several others were wanted.

On 25 December 2020, Oumar Sylla started a hunger strike as protest of his case not having been scheduled for trial even though the investigation was completed two months before. He ended his strike on 8 January 2021, after his trial was scheduled.

Between December 2020 and January 2021, Amnesty International documented and reported on the deaths of four people while in pretrial detention in Conakry central prison.

On 7 May 2021, the government spokesperson announced the release of 40 detainees following the dismissal of all charges against them. 57 people are still detained and charged for "attacking the institutions of the republic", "disturbing the state through devastation and looting", "participation in an insurrectionary movement", "threat of violence or death through an information system", and "production, dissemination and other provision of data likely to disturb public order or public security". Among them, there are four leaders of the opposition party, Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea: Ousmane "Gaoual" Diallo, Mamadou Cellou Balde, Ibrahima Chérif Bah, Amadou Djoulé Diallo, and the leader of the political movement "Nos valeurs communes", Etienne Soropogui.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: French

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 26 August 2021

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

NAME AND PRONOUN: Oumar Sylla (he/him/his/)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr29/3488/2021/en/>