

19 August 2016

Cameroon – Judicial harassment against human rights defender Musa Usman Ndamba

Human rights defender Mr **Musa Usman Ndamba** is the subject of court proceedings for several charges, including defamation. The second hearing will take place on 26 August 2016. The human rights defender has been the target of regular campaigns of judicial harassment.

[Musa Usman Ndamba](#) is the 1st National Vice President of the **Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA)**, an organisation which advocates for the rights of the indigenous Mbororo peoples in Cameroon. He works to expose corruption in certain land acquisition deals between the Government and landowners while monitoring the infringement of the land rights of indigenous people.

On 26 August 2016, Musa Usman Ndamba will attend the second hearing in the current criminal trial brought against him on the basis of a complaint by a landowner, Mr Alhadji Baba Ahmadou Danpullo. He is charged with “propagation of false information, false oath, false report and defamation of character”. The first hearing was held on 29 July 2016 at the Court of First Instance of Bamenda, and was adjourned until 26 August 2016. The current trial relies upon the same affidavit and evidence as used in a 2014 trial against him. In 2014, the case was dismissed for want of diligent prosecution.

Musa Usman Ndamba’s lawyers have cited irregularities in the trial proceedings against him. First of all, Musa Usman Ndamba has not been officially served with a summons. Secondly, and more importantly, the proceedings are based on an affidavit containing the alleged defamatory statements. The affidavit, however, is not signed by Musa Usman Ndamba but by another individual by the name of Musa Adamu. The police investigator in the case has maintained that Musa Usman Ndamba is the author of those statements and that he intentionally changed his name in order to escape prosecution. However, no evidence has been produced to demonstrate the name change. On the other hand, the human rights defender has provided evidence that he has not changed his name, in the form of an expired identity card dated 20 July 2000, which is in the same name and with the same information as his current identity card.

Front Line Defenders believes that the judicial harassment against Musa Usman Ndamba is directly related to his work in the defence of the rights of the Mbororo peoples in Cameroon and sees this as part of an ongoing pattern of judicial harassment against him.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Cameroon to:

1. Dismiss the case against **Musa Usman Ndamba**, which not only appears to be unfounded but is based on the same evidence as used in proceedings brought in 2014 and already dismissed by the court;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in **Cameroon** are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.