

22 December 2017

DRC: Arrest and detention of human rights defender Sony Ndjeka Olela

On 19 December 2017, human rights defender **Sony Ndjeka Olela** was arrested and detained in Kindu following his participation in a peaceful pro-democracy demonstration.

Sony Ndjeka Olela is a human rights defender and member of **Filimbi**. [Filimbi](#) is a pro-democracy and civil society movement which advocates against poor governance and human rights abuses, and which demands respect for the constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Filimbi promotes the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly as well as freedom of thought, working specifically with youth. The movement organises peaceful protests including sit-ins, demonstrations, debates and press conferences.

On 19 December 2017, Sony Ndjeka Olela took part in a peaceful march organised by civil society organisations in Kindu, including Filimbi, to demand that President Joseph Kabila end his presidency as his constitutional mandate finished in 2016. During the demonstration, the police targeted protesters with tear gas and arrested 27 demonstrators, including Sony Ndjeka Olela. While in detention at the local police station in Kindu, Sony Ndjeka Olela was taken for interrogation by members of the Agence National de Renseignement – ANR (National Intelligence Agency) on the basis that he was “taking photos during the demonstration”, despite the demonstration being public. The human rights defender remains at the office of the ANR in Kindu.

This incident is part of a larger pattern of targeted action and harassment against youth-led civil society movements in the DRC. On 28 November 2017, human rights defender [Ghislain Muhiwa](#) was [arrested](#) and detained along with twenty-one others for seven days for participating in a peaceful demonstration. On 30 September 2017, thirty-three members of [LUCHA](#) were [arrested](#) during a peaceful demonstration and detained for five days. On 19 September 2017, eleven human rights defenders affiliated with Filimbi were [arrested](#) while planning a peaceful demonstration and were detained for four days. Between 24 and 26 October 2016, fourteen members of LUCHA were [arrested](#) for mobilising students to participate in peaceful demonstrations organised throughout the DRC. Another LUCHA activist, Nicolas Mbiya, was [arrested](#) on 14 July 2017 and detained until 29 September 2017.

Front Line Defenders condemns the arbitrary arrest and detention of Sony Ndjeka Olela as it believes he has been targeted for the legitimate exercise of freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the DRC to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Sony Ndjeka Olela as Front Line Defenders believes that he is being held solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;

2. Ensure that the treatment of Sony Ndjeka Olela while in detention adheres to the conditions set out in the *'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment'*, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
3. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in the DRC and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

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