

11 August 2020

Democratic Republic of Congo: Human rights defender Lucien Byamungu Munganga arrested and charged

On 22 July 2020, human rights defender **Lucien Byamungu Munganga** was arbitrarily arrested in Kalehe, in South-Kivu province whilst peacefully protesting. He is charged with "damaging claims", "contempt of authority", "extortion of signature" and "usurpation of public office". He remains in detention at Kalehe central prison in very poor conditions.

Lucien Byamungu Munganga is a human rights defender affiliated with the organization [Lutte pour le Changement \(Fight for Change – LUCHA\)](#). LUCHA is a non-violent and non-partisan youth civil society movement founded in June 2012 in Goma, North Kivu. The movement advocates for social justice and accountability in DRC through campaigns, and encourages Congolese citizens to fight for the promotion and respect of human rights.

On 22 July 2020, Lucien Byamungu Munganga participated in a peaceful demonstration organised by LUCHA, in Kalehe. The aim of demonstration was to call for the release of four members of LUCHA arrested on 21 July 2020 during a peaceful protest denouncing the theft of public street lamps allocated to the village of Buchiro to combat insecurity. The four human rights defenders were held in detention at Minova police station for four days. During the protest on 22 July, Lucien Byamungu Munganga was arrested by order of the Mwami Shosho Ntale Franck Kamirogosa IV, a customary authority in the territory of Kalehe, and detained at Kalehe central prison.

While the four LUCHA members arrested on 21 July were released free of charges on 25 July, Lucien Byamungu Munganga remains in detention and is charged with "damaging claims", "contempt of authority", "extortion of signature" and "usurpation of public office". His hearing is scheduled for 14 August 2020.

LUCHA members believe that this arbitrary detention is in reprisal for the organization's legitimate and peaceful human rights activities. In recent years, members of the group have been targeted for their work in defence of human rights, and subjected to [arbitrary arrests](#), [detentions](#) and [beatings](#) when campaigning for the respect of democracy and human rights.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned by the arbitrary detention of Lucien Byamungu Munganga and the charges brought against him as it strongly believes that this is directly linked to his peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in DRC to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Lucien Byamungu Munganga, and cease all further harassment towards him, as Front Line Defenders believes that he was arbitrarily arrested and is currently detained as a result of his peaceful and legitimate human rights activities;

2. Ensure that the treatment of Lucien Byamungu Munganga 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. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in DRC 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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