



Republic of Cameroon: Attempted arrest and sentencing to 2 years' imprisonment of Mr. Wouassom TCHATCHOUA Dimitri, cyber-journalist, working for "direct de l'info" by magistrate Ernest Marius Baleng of the Tribunal de Grande Instance de Bafang in the Haut Nkam department.

URGENT CALL NO. 007/06/06/2023

Douala-Bafang, Tuesday June 06, 2023: The Réseau des Défenseurs des Droits Humains en Afrique Centrale (REDHAC), and its country-Cameroon coalition, remain deeply concerned by the situation facing journalists in Cameroon; more particularly the attacks on press freedoms, information and access to information on the one hand, without forgetting the attempted arrests and other reprisals of which they are victims.



The facts,

In December 2021, Mr. Wouassom TCHATCHOUA Dimitri, cyber-journalist, was physically assaulted at the Bafang courthouse by magistrate Mr. Ernest Marius BALENG with the help of chief prison warden Mr. NGANDO.

On March 03, 2022, Mr. TSISSA Paul Henri, bailiff and auctioneer at the Western Court of Appeal and Courts of Bafang, served at 11:36 a.m. a direct summons on Mr. Wouassom TCHATCHOUA Dimitri, cyber-journalist living in Kribi.

On April 05, 2022, the cyber-journalist was informed that he had to appear at the Bafang Court of First Instance, for a criminal case against Ernest Marius BALENG, a magistrate on duty at the Haut-Nkam Court of First Instance (TGI) in Bafang as examining magistrate n°2. Explicitly, the magistrate states that he was "defamed cybernetically" in January 2022, in the handling of the murder case of young Inès TCHANKO Tchouamaleu, by Mr. Wouassom TCHATCHOUA Dimitri.

In January 2023, Mr. Wouassom TCHATCHOUA Dimitri, cyber-journalist, was sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment for: "defamation" by the Court of First Instance (TPI) and High Court (TGI) of Bafang for having published in the online media "Direct de l'Info" and on several cyber-platforms the case of the murder of young Ines TCHANKO which occurred in May 2021 in Kékem. It should be pointed out, however, that not all the conditions required to guarantee a fair trial before this court were met, as one cannot be both judge and party.

On June 06, 2023, the trial opened at the Western Court of Appeal in Bafoussam, and was adjourned to July 04, 2023.

From all the above,

The Human Rights Defenders Network in Central Africa (REDHAC), and its country-Cameroon coalition:



- Support cyber-journalist Wouassom TCHATCHOUA Dimitri;
- Express their deep concern about this heavy sentence and regret that it violates regional and international human rights treaties in particular;
- Are concerned by the decision of the Tribunal de Première Instance (TPI) and the Tribunal de Grande Instance (TGI) of Bafang;
- Demand that this sentence be lifted outright, and that he be compensated for the harm he has suffered.
- **Ask for scrupulous respect :**
 - the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) ;
 - the Guidelines and Principles on the Right to a Fair Trial and Legal Assistance in Africa;
 - the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ;
 - the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Human Rights Defenders Network in Central Africa (REDHAC), and its country-Cameroon coalition, are concerned about the resurgence of human rights abuses in Central Africa:

- Attacks on press freedom, access to information and the dissemination of information;
- Legal and judicial harassment, intimidation, threats of arrest, death threats, assassinations and other reprisals against cyber-journalists;
- The muzzling of journalists and media outlets, especially private ones that contribute to the consolidation of the rule of law.

The Human Rights Defenders Network in Central African (REDHAC) and its country-Cameroon coalition recommend that the ACHPR and the United Nations demand that the Cameroon government:

- The immediate and unconditional release of Wouassom TCHATCHOUA Dimitri and to ensure his physical and moral integrity as well as that of his family;
- Scrupulous respect for national, regional and international human rights texts, treaties and other legal instruments:



- The Declaration of Principles on FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN AFRICA ADOPTED BY THE AFRICAN UNION AT ITS 32nd ORDINARY SESSION
- AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLE'S RIGHTS, OCTOBER 17-23, 2002, BANJUL, GAMBIA.
- THE UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS (RATIFIED BY CAMEROON ON JUNE 27 1984).

FOR ANY URGENT ACTION :

Useful addresses :

- His Excellency Paul Biya: President of the Republic, Presidency of the Republic, Palace of Unity, 1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon, tel: +237 22 23 40 25; Fax +237 222 08 70 email: cellcom@prc.cm;
- Chief Joseph Dion Nguete: Prime Minister and Head of Government, Primature du Cameroun, Fax: +237 22 23 57 35 and e-mail: spm@spm.gov.cm;
- Mr. Laurent Esso: Minister of State, Minister of Justice, Keeper of the Seals, Ministry of Justice, 1000 Yaoundé' Cameroon, Fax: + 237 223 00 05;
- Mr. Joseph Beti Assomo: Minister Delegate at the Presidency of the Republic in charge of Defense B.P1000 Yaoundé' Cameroon, Fax +237 223 59 71;
- Mr. Paul Atanga Nji: Minister of Territorial Administration, Fax: + 237 222 37 35;
- Mr. James Mouangue Kobil: President of the Cameroon National Human Rights Commission (CNDHC), Tel: +237 222 61 17, Fax: +237 222 60 82, E-mail: cndhl@iccn.net.cm;
- Mr. Nouhoum Sangaré: Regional Representative and Director of the United Nations Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa (CNUDHD-AC) Tel: (+237) 222 50 58 10);
- Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cameroon to the United Nations Office at Geneva, rue du Nant 6, 1207 Geneva, Switzerland, Fax: + 41 22 736 21 65, Email: mission.cameroun@bluewin.ch.

FOLLOW THE REDHAC :

Phone : Office (+237)233 42 64 04
MOB : (+237) 691 23 89 96/ 697 61 81 95
Facebook :RedhacRedhac
Twitter : @RedhacRedhac
Website: www.redhac.info