

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/rca-seleka-disbanded-but-journalists-15-10-2013,45341.html>

Africa - CAR

Climate of intimidation

## Seleka disbanded but journalists still threatened

18 October 2013

Reporters Without Borders is very concerned about the threat to journalists from the "Extraordinary Committee for the Defence of Democratic Achievements" (Comité extraordinaire de défense des acquis démocratiques- CEDAD), a new police organization led by Mahamat Nouradine Adam, a general in the former Seleka rebel coalition that ousted the previous government.

The editors of three Bangui-based dailies – **Julien Bella** of *Centrafrique Matin*, **Maka Gbossokotto** of *Le Citoyen* and **Ulrich Landry Ngopkele** of *Quotidien de Bangui* – have all been subjected to heavy-handed interrogation in the past month after publishing stories criticizing the CEDAD's activities. None of these interrogations was sanctioned by judicial procedure.

"We condemn these arbitrary arrests and serious threats targeting journalists," Reporters Without Borders said. "Without taking a position on the content of these newspapers articles, we think it is entirely unacceptable that media personnel are subjected to such intimidation.

"We appeal to the Central African Republic's government to implement the undertaking that President Michel Djotodia gave on 3 May, World Press Freedom Day, when he promised that no journalists would be arrested for what they report or the views they express while he is president.

"It is important that the Extraordinary Committee for the Defence of Democratic Achievements (CEDAD) should live up to its name and really defend democratic values, which include media freedom, and that it should fulfil its stated mission of 'ensuring security, calm and territorial integrity'."

Gen. Nouradine was the Seleka strongman in the initial phase of the rebellion. After disputing the Libreville Accord and participating in the march on Bangui that led to President Bozizé's fall, he was appointed minister in charge of public security, emigration and immigration, and public order on 31 March.

In theory, this gave him control of the police and gendarmerie. But on 23 August, a presidential decree reassigned the post to Pastor Josué Binoia and Gen. Nouradine was instead put in charge of the specially created CEDAD, which has established a degree of authority in Bangui.

According to the information received by Reporters Without Borders, it is the CEDAD that has been harassing journalists in recent weeks.

Ngopkele was summoned to Gen. Nouradine's base on 9 October and was subjected to an initial interrogation there before being taken, with a hood over his head, to an unknown location and held for several hours in a cell. He was then interrogated a second time by Gen. Nouradine himself, who wanted to know the source of a 4 October article headlined "Followers of Gen. Nouradine beaten at Roux Camp," referring to difficulties in the succession to the position of security minister. Forced to apologise before being released, Ngopkele continues to be harassed and threatened by CEDAD members.

When Gbossokotto responded to a police summons on 4 October, he was taken into custody by Gen. Nouradine's officers, who told him he got his facts wrong in an article in *Le Citoyen* and accused him of using a hostile tone towards Seleka. *Le Citoyen* subsequently published a retraction.

Bella was summoned by the CEDAD on 30 September for questioning about an article in *Centrafrique Matin*'s 25 September issue revealing the existence of a secret CEDAD prison. The

CEDAD police officers accused him of divulging classified information and trying to “destabilize” the government, and threatened to kill him. The next day, *Centrafrique Matin* published an article in which Bella apologized for revealing the prison’s existence and said the CEDAD was protecting the nation.

Reached by Reporters Without Borders, Gen. Nouradine acknowledged that he had summoned journalists but denied intimidating them. He nonetheless said that any future newspaper articles containing “mendacious allegations” would result in the jailing of the journalists responsible.

Reporters Without Borders already condemned [an increase in threats and violence against journalists in August](#).

The Central African Republic was ranked 65th out of 179 countries in [the 2013 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

*Photo : Vincent Fournier / Jeune Afrique*

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