

URGENT ACTION

TEACHERS HELD WITHOUT CHARGE OVER STRIKE

Two teachers were arrested in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, on 18 and 19 April, in connection with an ongoing peaceful strike that began on 25 February. They have not been charged and Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression and association.

Hilaire Eyima, head of the French department at the school Lycée de la Révolution, was arrested by plain clothes police officers at his home at around 7pm on 18 April. He was taken to the headquarters of the General Directorate for the Surveillance of the Territory (DGST - Direction General de Surveillance du Territoire), where he is still detained. He was informed that the reason for his arrest was the use of SMS (text messages) to spread information about the teachers' strike. He has not been formally charged with any criminal offence and he has no access to a lawyer, although his family have been able to visit him.

Claude Nzingoula, a teacher at the medical school in Brazzaville, was arrested on Friday 19 April at the school and was also taken to the DGST headquarters, where he has been detained since. He has not been charged with any criminal offence and has only been told that he was arrested in connection with the teachers' strike.

These arrests follow the arrest of members of a coalition of teachers' trade unions called CPRE (Concertation pour la revalorisation de la profession d'enseignant/Coalition for improving the teaching profession). On 25 February, CPRE called the strike, as negotiations between the Congolese authorities and trade unions had stalled. Almost all teachers in the country stopped working. **Daniel Ngami**, co-chairman of the CRPE, was arrested by agents of the National Security office (Bureau de la Sécurité Nationale) on 1 April. **Luc Mba Mongo**, a member of the CRPE, was arrested the following day. They were both detained without charge at the DGST then released on Saturday 6 April after Ngami Daniel was forced to read a statement on national media calling on teachers to go back to work. Teachers, however, continued to strike, particularly in the public sector. The leaders of CRPE have since been harassed and intimidated and have gone into hiding after their houses were searched without a warrant. Amnesty International was informed by the chairman of the CRPE that all their members fear arbitrary arrest.

Please write immediately in French, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Congolese authorities to release Hilaire Eyima and Claude Nzingoula immediately and unconditionally;
- Urging the Congolese authorities to ensure that, pending their release, the two men are given access to their family members, a lawyer of their choice and any medical attention they may require;
- Appealing on the Congolese authorities to cease the harassment and intimidation of members of the CRPE as well as any teacher because of the strike.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 JUNE 2013 TO:

President of the Republic
SE M. Dennis Sassou-Nguesso
Palais du Peuple
Brazzaville, Republic of Congo
Fax: +242 222 81 4557 (keep trying)
Salutation: Son Excellence

Minister of State for Justice and Human Rights; Keeper of the Seals
M. Aimé Emmanuel Yoka
Ministry of Justice and Human Rights
BP 2497
Brazzaville, Republic of Congo
Fax: +242 222 81 4167 (keep trying)
Salutation: M le Ministre

And copies to:
Minister of the Interior and Decentralization
M. Raymond Zéphyrin Mboulou
Ministry of the Interior and Decentralization
BP 880
Brazzaville, Republic of Congo.
Fax: +242 222 81 3317 (keep trying)

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Congolese teachers have been on an indefinite strike since 25 February 2013 demanding an improvement in the teaching profession, including higher wages and effective and fair recruitment within the public education system. The strike was called by CPRE (Concertation pour la revalorisation de la profession d'enseignant/Coalition for improving the teaching profession) after negotiation with the government failed.

Names and genders: Hilaire Eyima (m), Claude Nzigoula (m), Daniel Ngami (m), Luc Mba Mongo (m) and other members of CPRE (both)

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