

URGENT ACTION

TOPONA RELEASED, BUT STILL IN DANGER

Journalist Eric Topona, Secretary General of the Union of Chadian Journalists (UJT), was released on 19 August, after receiving a three-year suspended prison sentence for defamation from the N'Djamena High Court. His lawyer appealed against the decision the same day.

When **Eric Topona** was arrested on 6 May, he was charged with "endangering constitutional order" and transferred to the Am Sinene prison in the Chadian capital, N'djamena, where conditions for inmates are life-threatening. The N'Djamena prosecutor announced during a press conference on 1 August that serious charges against Eric Topona had been dropped and he was only being charged with minor offences. When he appeared before the N'Djamena High Court on 19 August, Eric Topona received a three-year suspended sentence and was released the same day.

In Chad, suspended prison sentences can have grave consequences for those who receive them. According to the Chadian penal code, those who receive suspended prison sentences remain under close surveillance and could be put in jail for the period of time they were previously sentenced to in addition to the new sentence, if they commit even a minor offense within five years of the previous conviction. They can also be summoned at any time by law enforcement officers, and can be prevented from visiting certain places or talking to certain people. They can be barred from taking part in certain activities for five years after sentencing.

Eric Topona has thanked Amnesty International since his release for the campaigning action on his behalf.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the first update of UA 116/13. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AFR20/004/2013/en>

Name: Eric Topona
Gender m/f: m

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