

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED CARTOONIST MUST BE FREED IMMEDIATELY

Ramón Esono Ebalé, an Equatorial Guinean cartoonist and activist, has spent almost 5 months in prison. He is being held in pre-trial detention waiting for a trial date. He was charged with counterfeiting money, but Ramón has denied the allegations.

On 16 February, Equatorial Guinean cartoonist and activist **Ramón Esono Ebalé** will have spent five months in pre-trial detention. He was arrested and detained in the capital of the country, Malabo, on 16 September 2017, and questioned over his cartoons that criticised Equatorial Guinea's President Teodoro Obiang and his government. The cartoons were shared on the internet. He was informed that he had formally been charged with counterfeiting money on 7 December 2017, after having already spent three months in detention without charge. Ramón has denied the allegations against him and insists that he is innocent.

Ramón is currently in pre-trial detention at Malabo Black Beach prison. The court is yet to set a date for his trial.

On 31 January, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa, Commissioner Lawrence Mute, sent a Letter of Appeal to the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea. In his letter, he raised concerns over allegations regarding Ramón Esono Ebalé's arrest and his remand to pre-trial detention. He requested clarification on the allegations of this detention and suggested that it may constitute a violation of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Despite the harsh living conditions in the Malabo Black Beach prison, Ramón is in good spirits. He shared the following message: *"I want to thank all those who are still fighting, hoping I am released/freed from the current situation, which I have nothing to do with. I have my hopes set on still presenting "#218Empire" [my new piece] in Vienna, as planned, and asserting the national dream of being at the level of other nations, with the only thing I'm good at: DRAWING. I will not give up. I was not born with the world at my feet. I was born to my mother's happiness. And today I live to draw on behalf of my people. Thank you."*

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Urging the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Ramón Esono Ebalé, as he has been detained solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression;
- Calling on them to ensure that the criminal justice system is not misused to target or harass human rights defenders;
- Calling on them to ensure that the right to freedom of expression is respected and protected in Equatorial Guinea;
- Calling on the authorities to ensure a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders and activists to work without fear of punishment, reprisal, or intimidation.

Contact these two officials by 26 March, 2018:

President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea
Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo
Palacio Presidencial
Avenida de la Libertad
Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

Ambassador Miguel Ntutumu Evuna Andeme,
Embassy of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea
2020 16th St NW, Washington, DC 20009
Phone: 202 518 5700
Fax: 202 518 5252
Email: secretary@egembassydc.com
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 219.17*

Here's why it is so important to report your actions: we record the actions taken on each case—letters, emails, calls and tweets—and use that information in our advocacy.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The 40 year old Equatorial Guinean cartoonist and activist, Ramón Esono Ebalé, was arrested in Malabo, the capital of the country, on 16 September. He was leaving a restaurant at around 7pm in the company of two Spanish nationals, when state security agents arrested them. The three were handcuffed, had their mobile phones confiscated, and were then taken to the Office against Terrorism and Dangerous Activities located at the Central Police Station. Once there, they were questioned by more than a dozen security agents. After answering questions regarding their reasons for being in the country and their relationship with Ramón, the two Spanish nationals were released. However, Ramón remained at the police station and was questioned about his cartoons that criticised Equatorial Guinea's President Teodoro Obiang and his government. The security agents warned Ramón that his cartoons depicting the president and him sharing them on the internet, could be considered defamatory.

Ramón, who has been living abroad for several years, had returned to his country on 29 August 2017 to renew his passport. He was in the country waiting for his new passport to be processed when he was arrested.

On 7 December 2017, Ramón was unexpectedly brought to Court. The Court served Ramón with an indictment (Auto de procesamiento) which was dated 27 November 2017 in which he was charged with counterfeiting money.

Human rights defenders and activists in Equatorial Guinea are regularly harassed, intimidated, arbitrarily arrested and detained simply for the work they do. All these attacks are meant to obstruct their work and force them into silence.

On 2 February 2018, the Spokesperson on the human rights situation in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea of the European Union (EU) issued a statement expressing serious concern for the continuing restrictions of freedoms and arrests in the country. For the EU, these restrictions confirm the serious deterioration of the human rights situation in the country. The EU also reminded Equatorial Guinea that, as a member of the United Nations Security Council, it is expected to take all necessary steps to fulfil its international obligations regarding human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Name: Ramón Esono Ebalé
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 219/17 Index: AFR 24/7867/2018 Issue Date: 12 February 2018