

URGENT ACTION

YOUTH ACTIVISTS RISK THREE YEARS IMPRISONMENT

After more than 160 days in incommunicado detention, pro-democracy youth activists Grâce Tshiunza, Mino Bopomi, Cedric Kalonji and Carbone Beni were brought to court on 19 June and charged. The four were arrested in Kinshasa on 30 December 2017 while mobilizing the public to participate in a peaceful demonstration organised by the Lay Coordination Committee (CLC) of the Catholic Church.

Youth activists **Grâce Tshiunza, Mino Bopomi, Cedric Kalonji, Carbone Ben** along with **Palmer Kabeya**, all members of the citizen movement Filimbi, were brought to court on 19 June in Kinshasa. The five activists have been charged with “insulting the Head of State” and “inciting civil disobedience”. They risk up to three years in prison if found guilty. The five activists are due in court for a hearing on 9 August.

Palmer Kabeya was arrested on 23 December 2017 and detained at the Military Intelligence Division facility known as DEMIAP in Kinshasa. The other four activists were arrested on 30 December 2017 and detained at different facilities of the National Intelligence Agency (ANR). They were arrested for mobilising the public to participate in a peaceful demonstration to demand the full implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement aimed at ensuring an “inclusive, peaceful and credible election.” The demonstration was organised by the CLC.

Carbone Beni was hospitalized on 1 May following a deterioration of his health while he was being held at the ANR’s facilities. He was diagnosed with appendicitis and a hernia. He later underwent a surgery at Ngaliema Hospital and was released from hospital on 6 May.

On 8 June, the five activists were brought to the Prosecutor General’s office in Kinshasa for questioning. The following day, all five of them were transferred to Makala Prison where they have since been detained.

Filimbi is one of the most vocal citizen’s movements calling for President Joseph Kabila to step down after his constitutionally-allowed two-terms in office expired in December 2016.

1) TAKE ACTION

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

- Urging the Congolese authorities to release Grâce Tshiunza, Mino Bopomi, Cedric Kalonji, Carbone Ben and Palmer Kabeya immediately and unconditionally;
- Calling on them to ensure that, pending their release, the five activists are not subjected to torture and other ill-treatment while in detention.

Contact these two officials by 7 September, 2018:

Minister of Justice

Alexis Tambwe Mwamba

Ministère de la Justice

228 Av de Lemera

Kinshasa-Gombe

BP 3137

DRC

Email: minjustdh@gmail.com

Salutation: **Your Excellency**

Ambassador François Nkuna Balumuene,

Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Congo

1100 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 725

Washington, D.C. 20036

Tel: 202 234 7690 | Fax: 202 234 2609 or 202 223 3377

Contact form: <https://ambardcusa.org/contact-us/>

Email: ambassade@ambardcusa.org

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 38.18*

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since 2016, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been facing a political crisis over delays in organizing general elections. President Joseph Kabila's second and last mandate was set to end in December 2016 according to the DRC's constitution. The elections are set to be held on 23 December 2018.

In December 2017, the Lay Coordination Committee (CLC), a group affiliated with the Catholic Church, called for peaceful demonstrations against what they considered to be the failure by the government to organize elections by December 2017 and fully implement the 31 December 2016 Agreement. The 31 December Agreement was signed between the opposition, civil society and the government under the leadership of the Conference of the Catholic Bishops (CENCO). Among other key provisions of the agreement are trust-building measures which include the release of individuals detained for politically-motivated reasons, respect for a free press and allowing the return of opposition leaders from exile to participate in the upcoming elections. Protests organized by the CLC on 31 December 2017, 21 January 2018 and 25 February 2018 were met with brutal force by the security officers. At least 17 individuals were killed and dozens injured.

Since 2015, the DRC government has resorted to illegal detentions to prevent human rights defenders and activists from organizing against what they considered to be delays in organizing the elections. In March 2015, pro-democracy activists, Fred Bauma and Yves Makwambala were arrested at a press conference organised to launch the Filimbi initiative, which aimed to denounce "the delays in organizing the elections." They were held incommunicado and released on bail in August 2016. The same month, Bienvenu Matumo was held in incommunicado detention for three days before being released without any explanation from the authorities. In December 2016, Gloria Senga and Musasa Tshibanda went missing for several days as they were organizing a demonstration against what they considered government attempts to delay the elections. It was later revealed that they had been detained by the DRC authorities.

Name: Grâce Tshiunza, Mino Bopomi, Cedric Kalonji, Carbone Ben and Palmer Kabeya
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 38/18 Index: AFR 62/8830/2018 Issue Date: 27 July 2018