

URGENT ACTION

BENINESE JOURNALIST IGNACE SOSSOU IS FREE

Investigative journalist Ignace Sossou was freed from Cotonou prison on 24 June after having served six months in arbitrary detention. On 19 May, the Cotonou Court of Appeal reduced his original 18-month prison sentence to 12 months, including six months suspended. He was sentenced to prison and fined for “harassment” for Tweets quoting the Public Prosecutor during a conference in which he described Benin’s digital code as ‘a weapon’ to be used against journalists.

NO FURTHER ACTION IS REQUESTED. MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO SENT APPEALS.

These are the words of Ignace Sossou after his release when he visited Amnesty International’s Benin office: “Amnesty action and all the mobilization behind my case contributed to my release. When I was in detention, my little brother, who visited me regularly in prison, came with paper articles of the mobilization actions of Amnesty members. It gave me strength. Today, I would like to thank Amnesty International. You’ve always been there for me, from the beginning”.

On 18 December 2019, Ignace Sossou posted tweets quoting the Public Prosecutor during a conference hosted by the French media development agency CFI. In his tweets, Ignace Sossou questioned the government’s decision to shut down the Internet during elections in April 2019 and stated that the Public Prosecutor had described Benin’s digital code as “a weapon” that can be used against journalists. The Public Prosecutor alleged that his remarks had been taken out of context by Ignace Sossou and issued a complaint against him at the Court of First Instance in the capital, Cotonou. On 24 December, Ignace Sossou appeared before a judge. He acknowledged having written the tweets but not to having harassed the Public Prosecutor.

Following Ignace Sossou's imprisonment, Amnesty International launched a campaign calling for his immediate and unconditional release as his prosecution was directly linked to his work as a journalist and was further demonstrative of the repressive climate and undue restrictions on the right to freedom of expression in Benin. The authorities must respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights of journalists, bloggers, activists and human rights defenders, in accordance with the country's international human rights obligations.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Ignace Sossou (he/his)

THIS IS THE THIRD AND FINAL OUTPUT FOR UA 8/20

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR1724862020ENGLISH.pdf>