



UA 74/21

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**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
PEACEFUL ACTIVISTS JAILED FOR CALL TO STRIKE**

Human rights defenders Elisée Lwatumba Kasonia and Eric Muhindo Muvumbu were arrested on 19 April by the National Intelligence Agency (ANR) in the town of Butembo in North Kivu province, while calling for a general strike to protest increased deadly armed attacks in the northeastern territory of Beni. They spent a night in a cell at the ANR before being transferred to a cell at the Prosecutor's office. On 24 April, they were transferred to the Butembo Central Prison where they are currently being held. The two members of the youth movement *Lutte pour le Changement* (LUCHA) are accused of "troubling public order" and "inciting for fiscal disobedience." They must be immediately and unconditionally released.

Please ask the Minister of Human Rights to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Elisée Lwatumba Kasonia and Eric Muhindo Muvumbu as they are being detained solely in connection to their peaceful human rights activism.
- Pending their release, ensure they have regular and unfettered access to their lawyer and families and are protected from torture and other ill-treatment.

Write to:

Albert Fabrice Puela

Minister of Human Rights

Email: fabricepuela@outlook.com or puelaalbertfabrice@gmail.com

Salutation: Dear Minister

Please copy:

Lohaka Yemba

Chargé d'affaires for the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

18 Range Road

Ottawa ON K1N 8J3

Phone: 613 230 6391

Fax: 613 230 1945

Email: ambardcongocan@rogers.com**Additional Information**

On 6 May, the DRC authorities announced a "State of Siege" for two provinces in the eastern part of the country: North Kivu and Ituri. This decision, according to the authorities, was meant to

restore security and peace in the two provinces where decades of armed conflicts and violence have left thousands of people dead and forced many more to flee their homes. Under this special regime, the civilian administration, including justice administration, was replaced by the military. Amnesty International is firmly opposed to the trials of civilians before military courts. And to date, the military courts are not fully operational, delaying the administration of justice to thousands of people in the two provinces. Amnesty International's statement on the proclamation of the "State of Siege" is available [here](#).

Elisée Lwatumba Kasonia is in his last year of high school. He risks missing the national exam that gives access to tertiary education. Eric Muhindo Muvumbu is married and a father of two children, aged 8 and 2. His small business has gone bankrupt due to his prolonged absence, leaving his wife struggling to provide for their two children alone.

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has determined that those detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights must be immediately released. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has called on all member states, in its resolution 466 on prisons and conditions of detention in Africa, to release different groups of detainees amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, including human rights defenders, "in order to reduce overcrowding in prisons and curb the spread of the Coronavirus".