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MALI

VICTORY FOR FREE EXPRESSION: AUTHOR AND ACTIVIST RELEASED AFTER ONE YEAR IN DETENTION

Malian author, activist, and university professor Etienne Sissoko was released from prison on March 27, 2025, after spending a year in arbitrary detention. His imprisonment stemmed solely from the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression.

Amnesty International members and supporters around the world took action — sending over 8,000 emails demanding his release. Their voices, along with the unwavering support of fellow Malian authors and international human rights defenders, helped secure his freedom.

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

Etienne Sissoko was sentenced on May 20, 2024, to two years in prison — with one year suspended — and fined XOF 3 million (approx. \$7,200). He was convicted of “harming the reputation of the state,” “defamation,” and “dissemination of false news” because of his book **Propaganda, Agitation and Harassment – Government Communication During the Transition in Mali**, published in December 2023.

Although a court granted him provisional release on October 14, 2024, the Prosecutor appealed the decision the same day, and he remained in Kéniéroba Prison, 75 km from Bamako — cut off from his family and legal team.

Amnesty members played a vital role. During an April 10, 2025 meeting with Mali’s National Human Rights Commission, the Minister of Justice publicly acknowledged the pressure campaign: “I received more than 8,000 emails from Amnesty International calling for the release of a single individual. It’s harassment.”

In a heartfelt message after his release, Etienne Sissoko thanked everyone who stood by him: *“These twelve months were more than just a struggle; they were a pilgrimage... Thank you to the human rights organizations, especially Amnesty International, and to the individuals who bravely demanded justice.”*

Amnesty International will continue pushing for the release of all those unjustly imprisoned in Mali for peacefully exercising their rights.