

10 August 2018

DRC: Attacks and threats against human rights defenders and journalists

On 3 August 2018, **Jean-Chrysostome Kijana** and other human rights defenders received renewed threats and intimidation. Threats and intimidation have escalated since 6 July 2018 after the release of a documentary entitled “Mbobero, la raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure” (Mbobero: Might Is Always Right), which exposed a land dispute between the people of Mbobero and Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

[Jean-Chrysostome Kijana](#) is the President of the Nouvelle Dynamique de la Société Civile en RDC – (New Civil Society Dynamic in the DRC – NDSCI), a human rights organisation which monitors and denounces human rights violations, promotes the rule of law and the right to education, and defends victims of sexual violence. He is also the Coordinator of the international campaign “Tournons la Page pour une Alternance Democratique en Afrique” (Let’s Turn the Page for Democratic Alteration in Africa) in the Democratic Republic of Congo and was involved in the filming of “Mbobero, la raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure”. Others, namely **Fidèle Mutchungu**, advocacy officer at NDSCI, journalists **Gaël Mpoyo** and **Franc Zongwe**, and artist **Gentil Safari**, who were also involved in the filming of the documentary, have gone into hiding as a result of threats received following its release.

On 3 August 2018, Jean-Chrysostome Kijana received a warning message from an unknown number ordering him to stop providing support to the people and the victims of evictions in Mbobero, a village located in South-Kivu, or else his children would be targeted.

On 31 July 2018, Jean-Chrysostome Kijana and Gentil Safari received death threats through a series of anonymous phone calls and messages. Prior to this event, on 15 July 2018, Gentil Safari was almost beaten to death by six armed men on the streets of Bukavu. It seems that the attack was a reprisal for his involvement in the documentary as his assailants ordered him to take down the video from his Youtube channel.

On 6 July 2018, Jean-Chrysostome Kijana, Fidèle Mutchungu, Gaël Mpoyo, Franc Zongwe and Gentil Safari launched the official screening of the documentary “Mbobero, la raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure”. It exposes the extreme violence used by state security forces in the forced evictions of approximately 2,500 people and destruction of more than 300 households and a hospital in Mbobero. The documentary contains the allegation that President Kabila bought only 200 hectares of land in Mbobero but has currently annexed more than 600 hectares.

On 8 February 2018, Jean-Chrysostome Kijana was verbally threatened by the minister of land affairs in an attempt to suppress the documentation of the human rights violations in Mbobero.

The human rights defenders and journalists involved in the documentary are currently in hiding and separated from their families, as they fear both for their own lives and for the lives of their loved ones.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned for the safety of Jean-Chrysostome Kijana, Fidèle

Mutchungu, Gaël Mpoyo, Franc Zongwe, Gentil Safari and their families and believes they are being targeted solely as a result of their legitimate activities in defence of human rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the violence, threats and acts of intimidation against Jean-Chrysostome Kijana, Fidèle Mutchungu, Gaël Mpoyo, Franc Zongwe and Gentil Safari .
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of all of the above-mentioned human rights defenders along with the physical and psychological integrity of their families.
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Democratic Republic of Congo are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.