

Guinea

Already two months of arbitrary detention for Oumar Sylla: we demand his immediate release!

For the past two months, Oumar Sylla, alias Foniké Menguè - a member of Front National pour la Défense de la Constitution (National Front for the Defense of the Constitution-FNDC) and deputy coordinator of Tournons La Page Guinea (Let's turn the page-TLP) - has been arbitrarily detained in Conakry central prison. He is charged with unlawful assembly, disturbing public order, undermining state security and destruction of public property.

On 29 September 2020, Oumar Sylla was violently arrested by plain clothes men in the street, in the commune of Matoto in Conakry as he was about to participate in a demonstration organized by FNDC to protest against the candidacy of President Alpha Condé for a third term. He was brought to the Direction de la Police Judiciaire (Directorate of Judicial Police - DPJ), where he was interrogated in the absence of his lawyers. His lawyers were refused entry into the DPJ offices, which is an infringement of the rights of defence. A few hours later, the prosecutor of the Mafanco court decided to place Oumar Sylla under a committal order and imprison him in Conakry central prison.

This is not the first time that the civil society activist has been arbitrarily arrested and detained. He was previously arrested on 17 April 2020 on charges of "spreading false information". The accusation was deemed unfounded by the criminal division of the Dixinn Court of First Instance. Oumar Sylla was then released on 27 August 2020 after more than four months of abusive detention.

"If the rule of law is operating in Guinea, it is under attack by the political power that abuses its ability to arrest civil society activists. This harassment must stop. The place of human rights defenders is not in prison." urged Agir ensemble pour les droits humains (Acting together for human rights).

Oumar Sylla also narrowly escaped arrest on 12 October 2019 when six other civil society figures with whom he was in contact were apprehended on the eve of a demonstration against the constitutional change.

The situation of Oumar Sylla is revealing of the treatment of representatives of Guinean civil society who mobilized to demand respect for the Constitution and to denounce President Alpha Condé's desire to remain in power.

"We strongly condemn the new arbitrary detention of Oumar Sylla, which is just one more illustration of the generalized repression against all dissident voices in Guinea" deplores the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (FIDH-OMCT).

The organizations signing this statement call on the Guinean authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Oumar Sylla, to end the persecution of those who peacefully express their opposition to the ruling authorities, and to guarantee the fundamental rights recognized by the Guinean Constitution.

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