

Cameroon: Judicial harassment against human rights defender Mr Musa Usman Ndamba and other members of MBOSCUDA

Musa Usman Ndamba



On 10 May 2013, human rights defender Mr **Musa Usman Ndamba** appeared before the Court of First Instance in Bamenda, on charges related to unsubstantiated allegations of misinformation.

Musa Usman Ndamba is the vice-president of **Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association** (MBOSCUDA), a social organisation which has championed the rights, including land rights, of Mbororo pastoralists in north-western Cameroon since the 1990s. At the heart of the case is a complaint filed by a local wealthy landowner, Mr **Baba Ahmadou Danpullo**, whose agents have reportedly threatened the human rights defender and his colleagues on a number of occasions.

As the court hearing began, the human rights defender was read four charges listed on a formal summons which was drafted in mid-April but served to him just one day before the hearing. Specifically, the prosecutor alleged that Musa Usman Ndamba had propagated false information capable of damaging the reputation of public authorities, and had made false declarations in a court of law whilst being under oath.

It was also alleged that the human rights defender had made false allegations against Baba Ahmadou Danpullo, and had as a result injured his reputation. Musa Usman Ndamba, who was accompanied by his counsel, denied all the allegations and pleaded not guilty to all four counts. His counsel eventually secured his bail before the hearing was adjourned to 27 May 2013.

MBOSCUDA also reports that at least five members of its staff have been forced to go into hiding after appearing as witnesses in an investigation into the attempted murder of Mr **Jeidoh Duni**, a Mbororo activist and also a MBOSCUDA paralegal. In an apparent act of retaliation against their testimony, false charges related to the “possession of fire arms” have been levelled against them and arrest warrants issued against them by the military tribunal of Bafoussam. In Cameroon, any crime that involves fire-arms comes under the jurisdiction of the military tribunal. Photo: **Jeidoh Duni at hospital following the attack on him.**



MBOSCUDA has maintained that those who shot and injured Jeidoh Duni were hired killers and has demanded full justice in this case. Of the five suspects who were arrested after the incident, three confessed to the crime and one even went so far as mentioning landowner Baba Ahmadou Danpullo as being behind the attack. However, all the suspects were released soon after they were handed over to the Gendarmerie authorities of the North-West Region.

MBOSCUDA has recently drafted a Universal Periodic Review submission to the UN in which they detail the sorts of threats that members of their community, and particularly those active within MBOSCUDA, face. The claims articulated within this submission are believed to have contributed to the worsening harassment of MBOSCUDA leaders. Musa Usman Ndamba's case is far from being an isolated incident of judicial harassment of Mbororo leaders; other Mbororo leaders presently undergoing judicial harassment as a result of their activism include Mr **Lamido Roufai Dahirou**, a prominent MBOSCUDA member and community leader, as well as Messrs **Sule Buba Dicko** and **Uselni Adamu**, both of whom are leaders of the Mbororo Aku organisation ACUDA.

Front Line Defenders is concerned that the unsubstantiated allegations being brought against Musa Usman Ndamba are in retaliation for his peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights, particularly land rights of the Mbororo pastoralists. Front Line Defenders also believes that the ongoing campaign of intimidation against MBOSCUDA leaders is related to their collaboration with international organisations and to their participation in the aforementioned investigation.

Source: <http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/node/22662>

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