

Justice & Dignity Campaign (JDC)

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Press Release

International human rights NGOs condemn the arbitrary detention of Esu youth leaders at the behest of billionaire rancher & plantations owner, Mr Baba Ahmadou Danpullo; Call for their immediate release.

Yaoundé, 10th July 2016: The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (OBS) and the Network of Human Rights Defenders in Central Africa (REDHAC) have issued separate calls on the Cameroon authorities to release the arbitrarily imprisoned youth leaders immediately and without conditions. The youth leaders: **Messrs. Redemption Godlove, Kpwe Philip Abue, Biame Divine, Azong Cyprian and Fuh Bernard**, were arrested at different times in April & May 2016, and are being held in prison despite the Mezam High Court ruling of 31st May 2016, declining jurisdiction and withdrawing a remand warrant for Redemption Godlove which effectively means they should have been released given they are being wrongly accused of the same offence on the same day, at the same location.

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The Observatory in an Urgent Appeal against '*Arbitrary detention of five members of the Esu Youth Development Association (EYDA)*' issued on 8th July, 2016, in Geneva and Paris:

"Condemns the arbitrary detention and judicial harassment of the above-mentioned land rights defenders, which only aim at sanctioning their legitimate peaceful human rights activities opposing land-grabbing." The Observatory further "calls upon the Cameroon authorities to release immediately and unconditionally Messrs. Redemption Godlove, Kpwe Philip Abue, Biame Divine, Azong Cyprian and Fuh Bernard; to put an end to the ongoing harassment, including at judicial level, against the above mentioned community leaders."

The Observatory calls on its members to write to the Cameroonian authorities to urge them to: "Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Messrs. Redemption Godlove, Kpwe Philip Abue, Biame Divine, Azong Cyprian and Fuh Bernard; Put an end to all acts of harassment - including at the administrative and judicial level - against them as well as against the Esu community and all human rights defenders in Cameroon. Conform in all circumstances with the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights instruments ratified by Cameroon."

On its part, in a communique entitled '*Arbitrary Detention, Judicial & Administrative Harassment*', issued in Douala, on 16 June, 2016, REDHAC, demands that:

"The administrative, judicial and police/gendarme authorities in the North-West Region release the five youth leaders without delay and guarantee the physical and moral integrity of the traditional ruler of Esu, the youth leaders, their lawyer in particular and the population of Esu in general. REDHAC further calls on the Cameroon state to act promptly to resolve the conflict. REDHAC further urges the state "to respect the African Charter on People and Human Rights and to ensure the billionaire rancher and Members of the Central Committee of the ruling CPDM Party, Mr Baba Ahmadou Danpullo, to conform to the Constitution, laws and regulations in force in Cameroon"

Justice and Dignity Campaign welcomes the interventions from REDHAC and OBS and call on the Cameroon authorities to immediately adhere to the calls and release the Esu youths. They are being held in prison despite a Mezam High Court judgement declining jurisdiction and withdrawing a remand warrant for Mr Redemption Godlove since 31st May 2016. As all the nine youths and HRH Fon Kum Ahuo II of Esu are all being accused of one and the same alleged offence, they all ought to be discharged.

Justice & Dignity Campaign also welcome the support of the Members of Parliament and the Leader of the main opposition, Ni John Fru Ndi of the SDF. According to a report in the national French Language newspaper 'Le Jour', the members of parliament at the request of Mr Fru Ndi met the Minister of Territorial Administration (MINATD), Mr Rene Sadi, on 22nd June 2016, in which meeting they submitted a report on the abuses of Mr Danpullo in Esu and Ndu in the

North-West Region and called on him to stop these violations, that according to them, are causing community tensions and suffering in the Region.

All the arrests are based on a complaint made by Mr Sale Umaru, Manager of Elba Ranch, to the effect that ONE hut belonging to a Ranch herder and a building under construction have been damaged. The gendarmes opened an investigation, and on the 8th May 2016, the Brigade Commander of Zhoa submitted a report to the State Prosecutor in Wum with the conclusion that no person could be associated with the alleged damages. Gendarmes have been stationed in the ranch area since 11th March 2016, so there is no way a group of people could have had access to ranch on 4th May, 2016, let alone damage anything, except the workers of the ranch, the only people permitted to have access. These are trumped up charges to imprison the youths and to intimidate and punish them for opposing the illegal appropriation of Esu communal land by Mr Baba Ahmadou Danpullo.

We call on Mr Danpullo to immediately withdraw the trumped up charges of libel against Barrister Robert Fon, the Esu community lawyer and Mr Chris Mbunwe and *The Post* newspaper. It is part of a long standing campaign of judicial harassment against anyone who dares to stand in the way of Mr Danpullo's violations of the rights of vulnerable people.

A representative of Esu community in the diaspora who are opposed to the land grab said: 'We welcome the International NGOs' condemnations of the arbitrary detention and harassment of the Esu youth leaders. We urge the Cameroon government to ensure the law of the land is enforced, release the FIVE youths unconditionally, ensure their physical and psychological safety, including that of the Esu community and their legal team and resolve the 30 year land conflict in Esu between Mr Danpullo and the Esu community once and for all.'

END

For editors:

FIDH is an international human rights NGO federating 178 organizations from 120 countries defending civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. FIDH headquarters is located in Paris, with regional bureaus in Pretoria, South Africa, and Tunis, Tunisia. FIDH also has a number of joint bureaus in Guinea, Ivory Coast and Mali. It also has permanent delegations in Geneva (UN), New York (UN), Brussels (EU), and The Hague (International Criminal Court). www.fidh.org/en/

OMCT, the World Organisation Against Torture, is an international NGO with a coalition of 311 affiliated organisations and tens of thousands of correspondents in every country. It is working against torture, summary executions, enforced disappearances and all other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Based in Geneva, OMCT has consultative status with the following institutions: UN, ILO, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Francophonie, and the Council of Europe. OMCT also has offices in Brussels and Tunis. www.omct.org/about/

OBS (The Observatory), is a joint initiative of FIDH and OMCT, dedicated to the protection of human rights defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need. OMCT and the Observatory have significantly contributed to the creation of a mandate for the protection of human rights defenders within the United Nations framework, as well as to the inclusion of this issue on the agenda of major regional organisations (African Commission, Inter-American Commission, OSCE, European Union, Council of Europe, etc.). www.omct.org/human-rights-defenders/observatory/

REDHAC is a regional human rights NGO covering 8 countries based in Douala, promoting, protecting and advocating for human rights. It sits on the Steering Group of the Forum of NGOs at the African Commission for Human and Peoples Rights and the Pan-African Network of Human Rights Defenders. REDHAC operates in Cameroon, Chad, Gabon, Congo Brazzaville, DRC, Central African Republic, Sao Tomé et Príncipe and Equatorial Guinea. www.redhac.org/index.php

Attachments:

- OBS Urgent Appeal (with more details about the cases and Esu)
- Communiqué from REDHAC
- Photos