

# URGENT ACTION

## THREE CHARGES AGAINST JOURNALIST DROPPED

**Fernand Cello, a Malagasy investigative journalist, has had three charges which were related to his journalism work dropped. These charges were related to his journalism work. He is also now receiving the medical care he needs.**

The charges of 'defamation', 'endangering state security', and 'incitation to hatred' which were related to **Fernand Cello's** journalism work have been dropped. The Malagasy investigative journalist is still facing four other charges related to accusations that he stole a cheque book. He has denied these allegations.

Fernand Cello, whose real name is Avimana Fernand, was arrested on Friday 5 May as he was leaving a private clinic in Antananarivo where he had spent several days receiving treatment for angina. The arrest came after he exposed an illegal sapphire mining site. The company managing the site was eventually ordered by the ministry of mining to suspend its operations for contravening the mining code.

Before his arrest, he had been in hiding since December 2016, after having aired a piece in which he accused a mining company and alleged government allies of running an illegal sapphire mine in Ilakaka, South-West Madagascar. The company was eventually ordered by the ministry of mining to suspend its operations for contravening the mining code. A few days after Fernand Cello's broadcasts, the radio station he works for, Radio Jupiter, was raided by military forces, who confiscated its transmitter. In August 2016, Radio Jupiter was targeted by unknown persons and a local power company turned off its power supply, after Fernand Cello accused them on air of carrying out unfair practices towards their clients.

Fernand Cello has been granted access to the medical care he requires. He was suffering from angina at the time of his arrest.

**Thank you to all those who sent appeals. No further action is requested from the UA network.**

This is the first update of UA 108.17. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr35/6232/2017/en/>

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