URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER HELD INCOMMUNICADO

Human rights defender Joaquín Elo Ayeto continues to be detained in Black Beach Prison, in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. He has been detained since 25 February 2019, when he was arrested at his home in Malabo. Joaquin was tried for defamation and threats against the President on 21 November 2019. Almost two months later, the sentence has not yet been read. On 2 January 2020, without any official notification or apparent cause, Joaquin was transferred to an incommunicado cell of the prison.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Minister of Justice, Religious Affairs & Penitentiary Institutions
Mr Salvador Ondo Ncumu
Ministry of Justice, Religious Affairs & Penitentiary Institutions
Malabo II, Frente al Ministerio de Comercio
Equatorial Guinea

Dear Minister,

I am writing to bring the case of human rights defender, Joaquín Elo Ayeto, to your attention. He is a member of the Somos+ Platform and the political opposition party, Convergence for Social Democracy (CPDS). He was arrested on 25 February 2019 at his house in Malabo and accused of having information on a plot to kill the President. He is currently being detained in Black Beach Prison.

According to reliable reports received by Amnesty International, Joaquín Elo Ayeto has been transferred to an incommunicado cell of the prison.

Information received indicates that he is not allowed to go to any of the recreational areas inside the prison or allowed to interact with or speak to fellow inmates. It is also important to note that there are concerns about the potentially poor hygiene conditions in his cell.

I am extremely concerned about Joaquin’s situation. Joaquin has been arbitrarily detained. He was tried for defamation and threats against the President on 21 November 2019, and almost two months later he is still waiting for his sentence to be read. According to his defence, during the trial the prosecutor was not able to prove any of the charges against him.

I urge you, as Minister of Justice, to immediately and unconditionally release Joaquín Elo Ayeto. The circumstances of his arrest and development around his trial indicate that he is being detained solely for peacefully exercising his human rights. Pending Joaquín Elo Ayeto’s release, I urge you to make sure that all measures are taken to ensure that he is granted access to his family and lawyers, and that he is provided with adequate medical treatment.

Yours sincerely,
Joaquín Elo Ayeto, also known as Paysa, is a member of the opposition political party Convergence for Social Democracy (Convergencia Para la Democracia Social) (CPDS), and a member of the coordination body for Somos+; a civil society platform made up of around 15 young men and women working to challenge injustices affecting young people. The platform was established in 2015 to enable young people to respond to the arbitrary arrests of some of their peers during the Africa Cup of Nations.

As a human rights activist and political opponent, Joaquín Elo Ayeto has been arrested and imprisoned several times. His arrest on Monday 25 February 2019 was Joaquín’s third time being arrested. The arrest took place at 6:00am at Joaquín’s home in Malabo – the capital of Equatorial Guinea. Joaquin was in his room on the first floor when he heard some noise on the ground floor where his tenants were. When Joaquin went down to the ground floor, he saw seven police officers. One of the officers asked him if he was Joaquín Elo Ayeto, and when Joaquin identified himself he was asked to wait outside as the officers went upstairs to his room.

Officers took Joaquin’s camera, laptop, mobile phone, a USB and some magazines from his political party. He was arrested and first taken to the Central Police station – known as Guantanamo – in Malabo. He was brought before a judge on Friday 1 March 2019. While in the presence of the judge, Joaquín insisted on showing injuries he sustained from torture in police custody. The judge refused to hear his testimony and ordered his pre-trial detention at Black Beach Prison. The only thing the judge had to say, regarding Joaquin’s injuries, was that he would receive medical treatment in prison.

On several occasions during Joaquin’s pre-trial detention his lawyers were denied access to him when they went to the prison to see him. His family has not been able to regularly visit him either. In August 2019 there were serious concerns for the Joaquin’s health, as he experienced severe diarrhoea and high fevers.

On 21 November Joaquin was tried at the Investigating Court Number 2 of Malabo. Defense lawyers have described the session as an embarrassing show, in which the Prosecutor was not able to bring forward any proof that could suggest the implication of Joaquin in any of the charges against him.

Since the trial took place lawyers have been going to the Court almost every day, to see when the sentence will be issued. The only answer they have received is that the Judicial authorities are currently in recess, and no sentence is expected until the judicial year is resumed. It is expected that judicial activities will resume in January 2020, although there is not yet a confirmed date. Despite the recess, Duty Courts continue to operate.

You can find more information on the situation of Human Rights defenders and activists in Equatorial Guinea here.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish
You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: [27 February 2020]
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Joaquín Elo Ayeto (he/his)

ADDITIONAL TARGETS: Embassy of Equatorial Guinea, 13 Park Pl, St. James’s, London SW1A 1LP

LINK TO PREVIOUS UAs: