

To whom it may concern

Free Fred Bauma and Yves Makwambala. Don't let the democratic aspirations of the Congolese youth die.

On March 15, 2015, Fred Bauma and Yves Makwambala were arrested in Kinshasa. They are affiliated with the respective civil movements: Lucha (Fred) and Filimbi (Yves). These two youth movements put good governance at the center of their action and work towards raising the consciousness of the population in regards to their democratic rights and obligations. The organizations demand that the authorities openly disclaim what they are doing, follow through on what they say they will do, and that they are clear about their vision for the future. Lucha and Filimbi encourage the population to demand these rights. They put focus on accountability, and they use their own generation as a lever: a youth who is demographically important, yet marginalized within the democratic process.

Fred and Yves crime was to meet with 30 pro-democratic activists from various African countries in order to share their experiences concerning the theme "Youth and Citizenship". Importantly, the meeting was authorized by the necessary state organizations, and was supported by USAID – an American development agency.

Today, more than three month later, Fred and Yves are in prison. They were transferred to the central prison "Makala" in Kinshasa at the beginning of May, after having spent nearly two months hidden in the Agence Nationale de Renseignements (ANR – Secret Police) dungeons. During that period no one knew where they were detained, and it was impossible for them to be visited by their lawyers.

Their legal process should be opened in the days that come. They have been accused of the following: of belonging to an association formed with the goal of attacking both persons and property; of having plotted against the life and position of the Head of State; of having attempted to destroy or change the constitutional system, and of having incited others to arm themselves against the State. The authorities also have accused Fred of causing civil disorder, and Yves of having publicly offended the Head of State.

Fred and Yves never plotted against the current president. They never betrayed anyone, and certainly not the Congolese nation, to which they are profoundly attached. Fred and Yves are young Congolese activists engaged in inspiring people to be active in their citizenship. Like us, they are profoundly attached to democratic values. They symbolize the hopes for change towards peace, democracy and development in the DRC.

In that capacity, Congolese and non-Congolese citizens who hold democracy in the DRC close to their hearts, consider their detention to be arbitrary, unjust, and undignified. Their detention constitutes a serious violation of the freedom of speech and expression, freedom of association and meeting as promoted by the constitution of the DRC and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - to which the DRC is a signatory. We support the DR Congo's National Assembly, whose members have, after participating in a debate on the subject, recommended a "political solution" in order to free the two activists. We demand therefore, that Fred and Yves be freed immediately, with no binding conditions, and that they be authorized to continue their civil activities within their respective movements without worry of further persecution.

Signatures:

1. Arnaud Zacharie, Secretary General of the Centre National de Coopération au Développement, (CNCD-11.11.11) - Belgium
2. Bart Staes, Member of European Parliament - Belgium
3. Bob Kazadi Kabamba, Professor at the Université de Liège (ULG) - DR Congo
4. Christiane Kayser, International consultant specialized in the Great Lakes region – Germany
5. Christoph Vogel, Researcher specialized in the Great Lakes region - Germany
6. Claudy Siar, Journalist and panafrikanist - France
7. Clément Boursin, Christian Action for the Abolition of Torture, ACAT/France - France
8. David Van Reybrouck, Researcher and writer, author of the book « Congo une Histoire » - Belgium
9. Devon Curtis, International Politics Professor at Cambridge University - United Kingdom
10. Dirk Van der Maelen, Member of Belgian Parliament - Belgium
11. Dominic Johnson, Journalist - Germany
12. Elizabeth Barad, New York City Bar Association - United States
13. Emanuela Baio Dossi, Italian Senator, member of the Special Commission for Protection and Human Rights - Italy
14. Flaubert Djateng, Coordinator of the Zenü Network - Cameroon
15. Herbert Weiss, Emeritus professor at City University of New York - United States
16. Isabelle Durant, Member of Brussels Parliament - Belgium
17. Jason Stearns, Researcher and writer, Director of the Usalama Program - United States
18. Jean Claude Willame, Professor and writer, Central Africa Specialist - Belgium
19. Juvénal Munubo Mubi, Member of DR Congo National Assembly - DR Congo
20. Kris Berwouts, Independent analyst on security, conflict and democracy in Central Africa - Belgium
21. Letieia de Torre, Member of Italian Parliament - Italy
22. Mark Demesmaeker, Member of European Parliament - Belgium
23. Maria Pia Garavaglia, Member of Italian Parliament – Italy
24. Micheline Mwendike Kamate, LUCHA Activist - DR Congo
25. Muhindo Butondo Nzangi, Member of DR Congo National Assembly – DR Congo
26. Mvemba Phezo Dizolele, Writer, analyst on International Politics and independent journalist, lecturer at John Hopkins University SAIS de Washington DC - DR Congo
27. Paul Higate, Professor at Bristol University - United Kingdom
28. Paul Kirby, Professor at Sussex University - United Kingdom
29. Philippe Hensmans, Director of Amnesty International Belgium - Belgium
30. Philippe Lamberts, Member of European Parliament - Belgium
31. Sabine de Bethune, Member and former President of Belgium Parliament - Belgium
32. Sharath Srinivasan, Director of Governance and Human Rights Center at Cambridge University - United Kingdom
33. Teresio Delfino, Former member of Italian Parliament and former Minister - Italy