

DRC: Authorities urged to free detained journalist

KINSHASA: Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has expressed concern about Tumba Lumembu, a journalist who has been detained in Kinshasa for the past six weeks, and has urged the authorities to free him. A reporter for the newspaper *La Tempête des Tropiques*, he was abducted on a street in the capital on 15 September 2010 by members of the National Intelligence Agency (ANR).

When President Joseph Kabila attended a Francophonie Summit news conference in Montreux on 24 October, a Reporters Without Borders representative asked him about the fate of journalists arrested by the ANR. He replied that he was "unaware of a journalist or journalists who have been arrested."

Bad physical, mental condition

When Lumembu was finally brought before the prosecutor's office in Kinshasa on 21 October, he appeared to be in very bad shape. Everything indicated that his physical condition is deteriorating rapidly. His psychological condition also seems to have suffered. Reporters Without Borders calls for him to be hospitalised for medical and psychological treatment.

Charged with "repeatedly insulting the head state" for shouting insulting remarks about President Kabila on the street, Lumembu was taken to the main Kinshasa penitentiary after his appearance. No other decision was taken and it is not known what will happen to him now.

Unjustifiable and unacceptable

Reporters Without Borders has regarded the circumstances of Lumembu's arrest and detention as unjustifiable and unacceptable. After being kidnapped by the ANR on the street, he was held incommunicado for more than two weeks. Neither his family nor his colleagues were notified of his arrest.

On 8 October, Reporters Without Borders wrote to interior minister Adolphe Lumanu Mulenda Bwana N'Sefu (who is also deputy prime minister) calling for Lumembu's release. There has not yet been any response.