

# Central African Republic editor charged with incitement

NEW YORK: Central African Republic authorities have charged the director of the independent weekly *The Hills* of Bangui, Faustin Bambou, with inciting hatred and disorder among the military forces and insulting the government, Bambou told CPJ.



The director was sent directly to Ngaragba Prison in the capital, Bangui. Four military policemen arrested Bambou at his office on May 27 and detained him at their Research and Investigations Department for 10 days before they presented him with any official charges, according to local journalists.

Bambou wrote four articles from April to May 2011 about the minister of defense, Francis Bozize, alleging that Bozize had embezzled funds provided by the European Union. These funds were meant to cover pensions of retired military and police personnel, according to a joint statement released by the Union of Central African Journalists and the Observatory of Central African Media. Minister Bozize, who is also the son of the president, is suspected with having ordered Bambou's arrest, Bambou told CPJ. The Central African Republic decriminalised press offenses in 2005, so there is no basis in the republic's current laws for Bambou's detention.

On May 17, government spokesman Alain-Georges Ngatoua criticised *The Hills* of Bangui and two other independent publications on national radio, accusing the publications of conducting a "smear campaign" against the defense minister, according to local reports.

"Imprisoning Faustin Bambou defies the Central African Republic's own laws, which decriminalised press offenses six years ago," said CPJ East Africa consultant Tom Rhodes. "Authorities must provide Bambou with bail immediately."

In January 2008, Bangui's Magisterial Court sentenced Bambou to six months in prison for inciting, revolt, abuse and for defamation: Bambou had supposedly defamed the Central African republic's minister of mining (now minister of foreign affairs) by writing of his alleged embezzlement. The president pardoned Bambou the following month.

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