

17 September 2020

Democratic Republic of Congo: Disappearance of human rights defender Olivier Muhubiri

On 15 September 2020, human rights defender **Olivier Muhubiri** is reported to have disappeared in Uvira, South-Kivu province. His disappearance comes shortly after he began receiving threats for his denunciation of the killing of civilians in Bilalombili and Ngezi villages by armed groups.

[Olivier Muhubiri](#) is a human rights defender and member of the organisation Lutte pour le changement (Fight for Change – LUCHA) RDC Afrique. LUCHA RDC Afrique is a civil society movement advocating for social justice and encouraging citizens to fight for the promotion and respect of human rights through campaigns and petitions.

According to Olivier Muhubiri's family, the human rights defender left his home on 15 September 2020 at approximately 4pm to visit a friend in his neighbourhood. His family and friends have not heard from him since, nor have they been able to reach him by phone. Olivier Muhubiri's family has filed a missing person's report at Uvira police station.

Olivier Muhubiri's family believes his disappearance is in reprisal for a letter written by LUCHA RDC Afrique on 2 September, and signed by Olivier Muhubiri, that was sent to the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in Uvira, with local authorities in copy. The letter denounced the killing of civilians in Bilalombili and Ngezi villages on 31 August by armed groups. LUCHA RDC Afrique called for the population to be protected and for investigations to be conducted to bring those responsible to justice.

On 6 September 2020, around 10 am, Olivier Muhubiri and Christine Mugabo, members of LUCHA RDC Afrique received three anonymous phone calls from men who reportedly identified themselves as high-ranking Congolese army officers based in Uvira. They threatened to kill the defenders for publishing the letter. At approximately 4pm, the two defenders received another phone call from a private number and the caller threatened them to cease their human rights activities. The human rights defenders filed a complaint at Uvira police station on 10 September.

Since 13 September 2020, Olivier Muhubiri had reportedly alerted his colleagues and his family about the presence of unknown individuals near his home.

Front Line Defenders is seriously concerned regarding the disappearance of Olivier Muhubiri, which it believes to be linked to his peaceful and legitimate human rights work denouncing the extrajudicial killings of civilians in the country.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Democratic Republic of Congo to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the disappearance of human rights defender Olivier Muhubiri, with a view to identifying his whereabouts and ensuring his protection, publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Strongly condemn the death threats against Olivier Muhubiri and Christine Mugabo as it is believed to be directly motivated by their peaceful and legitimate human rights work;

3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of Olivier Muhubiri and Christine Mugabo;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in DRC are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including harassment and threats.

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