

Publish What You Pay Press Release

Democratic Republic of Congo: PWYP welcomes the release of human rights and transparency campaigner Golden Misabiko; calls for all charges to be dropped

London, 21 August 2009: PWYP welcomes the release on bail on 20 August of Golden Misabiko, President of the African Association for the Protection of Human Rights in Katanga province (ASADHO/Katanga) and a member of Publish What You Pay (PWYP) in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Misabiko was arrested on 24 July by the Congolese intelligence services in Lubumbashi in south-east Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and detained at the Prosecutor's Office [Parquet] in poor conditions on charges of "undermining state security" and "defamation".

He was transferred to the city's hospital earlier this week following alarming signs that his health was deteriorating.

The charges against Golden Misabiko relate to a report published by ASADHO/Katanga in early July on the alleged illegal and dangerous exploitation of the Shinkolobwe uranium mine despite its closure by the government in January 2004. The report also criticised the lack of transparency surrounding an agreement between the Congolese government and French nuclear energy giant AREVA on the exploration and exploitation of Congolese uranium signed in March 2009.

Lubumbashi's public prosecutor has accused Golden Misabiko of "inciting public rebellion against state authorities" and has appealed the court's decision on his provisional release.

Misabiko's release follows an intense civil society campaign both in the DRC and globally in support of the human rights and transparency advocate. In an open letter on 7 August ahead of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's visit to the DRC, PWYP urged the U.S. government to call on the Congolese authorities to release Mr. Misabiko and drop all charges against him.

Also on 7 August, five other civil society activists were arrested by the Special Services police while participating in a peaceful protest against Misabiko's arrest. They were released the same day without charge.

PWYP calls on the Congolese government to ensure that civil society activists, including those campaigning for transparency and accountability in the natural resource sector can work and express themselves freely, without fear of harassment or reprisals.

PWYP calls for all charges against Golden Misabiko to be dropped.

Notes:

Publish What You Pay (PWYP) is a global civil society coalition with over 300 member groups who work together for greater transparency and accountability in the oil, gas and mining industries.

NGOs Letter to President Kabila <http://asadhokat.blogspot.com/2009/08/03/08/2009>

PWYP Statement on Golden Misabiko's arrest and Open Letter to Hillary Clinton available at:
www.publishwhatyoupay.org

Media contact:

Marie-Ange Kalenga, PWYP Africa Regional Coordinator
+ 237 9639 3651
mkalenga@gmail.com