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### **Democratic Republic of Congo: Arbitrary arrest and detention of two human rights defenders**

On 7 April 2022, human rights defenders and LUCHA RDC members, **Matendo Justin** and **Tubaholeze Kigabi**, were arrested without a warrant by military officers in the village of Runingu. The two human rights defenders were arrested at the starting point of a peaceful protest they had helped organise. The military officers dispersed the protest before it had begun, and detained the two human rights defenders. Though they have not been formally charged, they are being accused of “disrupting public order” and are still detained at the central police station of Ruziya.

[Matendo Justin](#) and [Tubaholeze Kigabi](#) are human rights defenders and members of the organisation [Lutte pour le changement \(Fight for Change – LUCHA\) RDC Afrique](#). Together, they work on community outreach for the organisation. LUCHA RDC Afrique is a civil society movement that advocates for social justice and encourages citizens to peacefully fight for the promotion and respect of human rights through campaigns and petitions.

On 7 April 2022, Matendo Justin and Tubaholeze Kigabi were gathering protestors for a peaceful protest. They were intending to protest against the influx of military officers from Burundi. They were also protesting to demand the DRC’s law enforcement to protect the Ruzizi plain from the influx of Imbonerakure, a Burundian youth led movement associated with a political party in Burundi, who have moved into the high plateau of the Ruzizi plain and are carrying out human rights violations against the local population. The military forces of the DRC violently broke up the gathering on 7 April 2022 and arrested the two human rights defenders. Matendo Justin and Tubaholeze Kigabi are currently detained with no access to their lawyers. On 8 April 2022, the commander of the armed forces in Ruziya alleged that the human rights defenders had been transferred from the prison in Ruziya to Kabunambo to another locality. Front Line Defenders is able to confirm the two human rights defenders’ have in fact not been transferred and are currently still detained at the Ruziya central police station.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the arbitrary arrest and detention of human rights defenders Matendo Justin and Tubaholeze Kigabi, as it believes they are being targeted solely as a result of their peaceful and legitimate work in defence of human rights.

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

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Matendo Justin and Tubaholeze Kigabi, as Front Line Defenders believes that they are being held solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Matendo Justin and Tubaholeze Kigabi, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the ‘Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment’, adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;

3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in the Democratic Republic of Congo are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.