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| AFR 37/8672/2024 - Mali - Date: 28 October 2024 |
| FURTHER INFORMATION | URGENT ACTION | FI UA 049/24-1 |
| Author activist remains arbitrarily detained |
| MALI |

On 14 October, the Bamako Court of Appeal ordered Étienne Sissoko’s provisional release pending his appeal trial on 11 November, but the decision was suspended later the same day, following an appeal filed by the Prosecutor. Étienne Sissoko, a Malian economist and university professor, was convicted on charges of defamation, damaging the state’s reputation and distributing fake news after the publication of a book in which he denounced alleged propaganda in the Malian government’s public information campaign. He was sentenced to two years in prison, with one year suspended, and a fine of XOF 3 million (approximately 4,500 Euros). He must be immediately and unconditionally released.

Over the past three years, the shrinking of civic space in Mali has been characterized by violations of human rights including the rights to freedom of expression, association, information and press freedom. Mali has been governed since 2021 by military officers who took control from the democratically elected government of President Keita in 2020 following protests, and then removed the civilian transitional authorities from power in May 2021, following disagreements.

Human rights defenders, activists and opposition leaders who publicly expressed their disagreement with the decisions taken by the transitional authorities have been arbitrarily arrested, detained, and prosecuted since 2022.

This isn’t the first time Professor Étienne Sissoko has been targeted by the authorities. On 16 January 2022, he was arrested by the prosecutorial office of the District Court of Commune 4 of Bamako for comments tending toward «stigmatization or regionalist, ethnic or religious discrimination with the aim of pitting citizens against each other using ICTs», after he spoke on TV about the impact of ECOWAS sanctions in Mali. He was provisionally released in June 2022 and banned from leaving the country.

On 10 April 2024, the Council of Ministers issued a decree suspending the activities of political parties and associations until further notice. A day after, Mali's high authority for communication issued a no-tice announcing a ban on reporting and broadcasting activities of political parties or association. On 10 July 2024, the authorities lifted the suspension.

Since February 2024, at least three organisations have been dissolved including the Pupils and Students’ Association of Mali (AEEM).

TAKE ACTION

* Write an appeal in your own words or use the **model letter** on **page 2**.
* Please take action before **31 March** 2025.
* Preferred language: **French.** You can also write in your own language.
* **INFO POSTAGE**: Post delivery is possible to almost all countries. Please check at the Swiss Post whether letters are currently being delivered to the destination country.
If not, please send by email, fax or social media and/or via the embassy with the request for forwarding to the named person. Thank you !

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| APPEALS TO | COPIES TO |
| Mr Mahamadou KassoguéMinister of Justice and Human rightsCite administrative – batiment 12BP 97 BamakoMaliEmail: mamoudoukassogue@gmail.com  | Ambassade de la République du MaliRoute de Pré-Bois 20Immeuble ICC 1er étage Porte GC.P. 1814 1215 Genève 15 AéroportFax: 022 710 09 69E-mail: missionmalisuisse@gmail.com  |
| ⭢ **Social media guidance** see online: [amnesty.ch](https://www.amnesty.ch) 🔍**UA 049/24** |

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Mr Mahamadou Kassogué
Minister of Justice and Human rights
Cite administrative – batiment 12
BP 97 Bamako
Mali

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Dear Minister,

**I am deeply concerned with the continued arbitrary detention of Étienne Sissoko when he should never have spent a single day in prison.**

On 14 October, the Bamako Court of Appeal ordered the provisional release of author, activist and professor, Étienne Sissoko pending his appeal – set for 11 November 2024, but the Prosecutor appealed the decision on the same day, keeping him in detention. Étienne Sissoko therefore remains held in Kéniéroba Prison, 75 km from Bamako, Mali’s capital, far away from his family and lawyers

On 20 May 2024, Professor Étienne Sissoko was sentenced to two years in prison, with one year suspended. He was convicted of «harming the reputation of the state», «defamation» and «dissemination of false news disturbing the public peace» because of his book, «Propaganda, Agitation and Harassment – government communication during the transition in Mali», published in December 2023.

Étienne Sissoko’s detention stems solely from the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression. Arrest or detention as punishment for the peaceful exercise of human rights, including the right to freedom of expression, is arbitrary and violates the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Mali is a state party.

**In light of the above, I call on you to take all necessary steps to ensure that Étienne Sissoko is immediately and unconditionally released and his conviction and sentence quashed.**

Yours sincerely.

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**Copie**

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