

URGENT ACTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ARRESTED ONCE AGAIN

On August 1, Equatorial Guinean human rights defender, Joaquín Elo Ayeto, was arrested at his house in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea's capital, when members of the Gendarmerie forcibly entered his house and took him away. He was accused of carrying out illegal activities through the civil society platform, Somos +, which he is a member of and which the authorities claim is not legally registered. He was initially sent to Malabo Black Beach prison before being transferred on August 13 to Oveng Azem prison, in the eastern city of Mongomo, where he is held in pretrial detention. The Equatorial Guinean authorities must immediately release Joaquín Elo Ayeto from arbitrary detention which stems solely from his work as a human rights defender.

TAKE ACTION:

- Write a letter in your own words or using the sample below as a guide to one or both government officials listed. You can also email, fax, call or Tweet them.
- [Click here](#) to let us know the actions you took on **Urgent Action 75.24**. It's important to report because we share the total number with the officials we are trying to persuade and the people we are trying to help.

Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo
President of Equatorial Guinea
Palacio Presidencial de Guinea Ecuatorial
Avenida de Libertad,
Malabo, Guinea Ecuatorial
X/Twitter: [@teonguema](#) (Vice President)

Embassy of Equatorial Guinea
His Excellency Dr. Crisantos Obama Ondo
2020 16TH St NW
Washington, DC 20009
Email: info@egembassydc.com OR
secretary@egembassydc.com
Salutation: Dear Ambassador Dr. Crisantos Obama
Ondo

His Excellency, or Dear Ambassador,

I am writing to bring to your attention the case of human rights defender, **Joaquín Elo Ayeto**, a member of civil society platform Somos+ and the political opposition party Convergence for Social Democracy, who was arrested on August 1 and is currently being detained in Oveng Azem prison.

Joaquín Elo Ayeto was accused of carrying out illegal activities through his organization Somos + which, they said, has not been properly registered.

In June 2020, Joaquín Elo Ayeto applied for registration of Somos+ to the Ministry of Interior and Local Corporations. However, several days later, he was notified that the application should be validated by the General Direction of Human Rights, although such validation is not required by the law.

In light of the above, I urge you to immediately release Joaquin Elo Ayeto as his arbitrary detention stems from his peaceful activism and the exercise of his constitutional rights of freedom of association, expression and peaceful assembly. Pending his release, I urge you to ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and has access to a lawyer, who must be allowed to carry out their work freely and without fear of reprisal.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Joaquín Elo Ayeto is a member of the opposition political party Convergence for Social Democracy (Convergencia Para la Democracia Social), (CPDS) and a member of the coordination body for Somos+, a civil society platform established in 2015 which carries out human rights work.

Joaquin Elo Ayeto's detention took place a few days after he, with some other representatives from Annabon island, visited the French embassy in Malabo. The purpose of the meeting was to reinforce cooperation between the embassy and the human rights platform Somos+. Somos+ was working to expose the human rights violations that have been taking place recently on the Annabon island following the demonstrations of its inhabitants against the impact of some mining dynamite explosions taking place.

According to some media reports, a gendarmerie officer said that "Joaquin operates clandestinely and his association is illegal".

This is not the first time that Joaquín Elo Ayeto has been targeted for his human rights work. Over the past eight years, he has been a victim of threats, harassment, and multiple arrests and detentions. On November 29, 2016, two military officers beat him after he posted an article online about an officer refusing to pay a toll. On June 27, 2017, he was arrested again after he and others from Somos+ had taken part in an event calling for justice for the death of a young taxi driver, allegedly killed by the army. A week later he was released. On February 25, 2019, he was arrested at his house in Malabo after being accused of having information on a plot to kill the president. He was allegedly subjected to torture at least twice while being held at the Central Police Station, which resulted in physical injuries. He was transferred to the Malabo Black Beach Prison where he spent almost a year in pre-trial detention until President Obiang ordered his release on February 14, 2020. He was again detained in December 2022 for organizing a conference on human rights and corruption in Equatorial Guinea "without official authorization" on International Human Rights Day.

In a short video posted on Facebook a few hours before his arrest on August 1, 2024, Joaquin Elo Ayeto said he was tired of being constantly arrested.

Article 13 of the Equatorial Guinea Constitution guarantees the rights to freedom of association, expression and peaceful assembly.

On August 3, Angel Obama Obiang Eseng, Joaquin Elo Ayeto's lawyer was arrested and detained for 48 hours just for assisting his client. He was accused of providing legal representation for an illegal organization. He was subsequently released. However, on August 14, he was temporary suspended as member of the Equatorial Guinea BAR Association, preventing him from practicing as a lawyer. According to the Bar Association, defending Joaquin Elo Ayeto's organization was contrary to the association's statute. In addition to Joaquín Elo Ayeto, Angel Obama was also the lawyer of other human rights defenders and was working on other human rights cases.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Spanish or your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: January 31, 2025

NAME AND PRONOUN: Joaquin Elo Ayeto (he/his/him)