

Congolese radio journalist arrested at protest is beaten in custody

Congolese authorities should immediately drop all charges against Jean Pierre Tshitshabu, a reporter for the independent broadcaster Radio Television KADEKAS, and investigate claims that the journalist was assaulted in custody, the Committee to Protect Journalists has said.



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Security forces arrested Tshitshabu in Lubumbashi on July 31, while he was covering protests calling for elections, according to the journalist's lawyer, David Ilunga Sheria, and the Congolese press freedom advocacy organisation [Journalistes en Danger](#). The Democratic Republic of Congo has experienced unrest since December last year, when President Joseph Kabila failed to hold scheduled elections at the end of his term.

Tshitshabu, who was arrested alongside four activists, has been charged with "incitement and provocation," Ilunga told CPJ. The lawyer told CPJ that when he was leaving Kasapa Central Prison after visiting the journalist on August 18, he witnessed prison inmates repeatedly slap and hit Tshitshabu, and said that the prison guards did not intervene. The journalist sustained multiple cuts and bruises in the attack. Ilunga said that the prison failed to provide adequate medical treatment and that Tshitshabu is still suffering from multiple injuries.

CPJ's repeated phone calls to Justin Kutule, the director of Kasapa prison, went unanswered.

"Congolese authorities should immediately release Jean Pierre Tshibitshabu, drop all charges against the journalist, and take action against those who attacked him in prison," said CPJ Africa program coordinator, Angela Quintal. "Journalists must be permitted to operate freely without fear of harassment or detention in the Democratic Republic of Congo, especially during times of tension."

On the day of his arrest, police confiscated Tshibitshabu's phone and seized about 30,000 Congolese francs (US\$19) as well as US\$20 in cash, Ilunga told CPJ, adding that the Tshibitshabu planned to file a complaint against the security forces.

When CPJ contacted the Lubumbashi police, a person who identified himself only as Major Paul refused to comment.

Chaertk Ntamdwe, the director of Radio Television KADEKAS, told CPJ the station is contacting international organisations to highlight Tshibitshabu's case and secure his release. The journalist is due to appear in a Lubumbashi court on August 29, his lawyer told CPJ.

[CPJ is aware](#) of at least 18 other journalists detained or harassed by Congolese security forces on the same day Tshibitshabu was arrested. The other arrested journalists were released without charge.

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