

## **ADF Statement on the Death of a Prominent Human Rights Activist in DRC**

**3 June 2010**

The African Democracy Forum (ADF), a network of over 450 democracy and human rights organizations throughout Africa, is in a state of shock to learn the death of Mr. Floribert CHEBEYA BAHIZIRE, Executive Director of La Voix des sans-Voix (the Voice of the Voiceless - VSV), prominent human rights activist, and ADF member from Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Mr. Maina KIAI, a member of ADF Management Committee and former Chairperson of Kenya's National Commission on Human Rights, remember Mr. CHEBEYA BAHIRIZE, saying "Floribert was one of the original pioneers in the African human rights movement. His work, contributions, and inputs have inspired so many people across Africa."

On 2 June 2010, Mr. CHEBEYA BAHIZIRE's body was found dead in his car outside of Kinshasa. We also learned that the body of his driver Mr. Fidele BAZAN EDADI was found in a different place. As reported by various civil society and media groups, including Amnesty International, the World Organization against Torture, the International Federation for Human Rights, Frontline Defenders, the World Movement for Democracy, East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network, and the Associated Press, the circumstances around his death remain unclear, but seem highly suspicious.

As indicated in VSV's press release earlier on 2 June, Mr. CHEBEYA BAHIZIRE received a phone call on 1 June inviting him to meet the Inspector General of the Congolese National Police (IG/PNC), General John NUMBI BANYA TAMBO. In the late afternoon that day, Mr. CHEBEYA BAHIZIRE visited an office of the Inspector General for a meeting. His wife received a SMS message from him at 7:44 pm, saying that he could not meet Inspector General. The last communication that she had with him was a SMS message received from his mobile number at 9:11 pm saying "Well received in advance good appetite" replying to his daughter who asked him to buy some sausages.

This incident is a reminder of the continuing and increasing challenges to human rights defenders in DRC. ADF Member Robert Ilunga Numbi of Les Amis de Nelson Mandela was arbitrarily arrested last August for his reporting on workers' conditions. A number of others have been facing similar harassments and intimidations by the authorities. The ADF is deeply concerned about the lack of protection for human rights defenders in DRC and the lack of respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and other international instruments ratified by the DRC governments.

The ADF calls on:

- all members of the ADF to remember his contributions to democracy and human rights movements not only in DRC, but also throughout Africa, and to express our solidarity for human rights defenders in DRC;
- the Congolese government to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation of the deaths of Mr CHEBEYA BIHIZIRE and MR. BAZAN EDADI;
- the Congolese government to ensure the protection of human rights activists in the country;
- the Congolese government, as a current chair of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), to act on the SADC Common Agenda, which includes the promotion of democratic, legitimate and effective institutions and practices;
- the Congolese government to commit itself to serve interests of the people, provide the people with security and safety, and guarantee people's freedom of assembly, association, and expression, as the country celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its independence on 30 June; and,
- the UN Human Rights Council, the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, and the International Community, to urge the Congolese government to initiative a thorough and impartial investigation of the deaths of Mr CHEBEYA BIHIZIRE and MR. BAZAN EDADI.



The ADF wishes to send our sincere condolences to the families of Mr. CHEBEYA BAHIZIRE and Mr. BAZANA EDADI.

Our colleague and dear friend, Mr. Floribert CHEBEYA BAHIZIRE, will be truly missed by the ADF and its members. The ADF is committed to carrying on his courage, inspiration, and commitment to human rights and democratic values.

*In Solidarity,*  
*Hannah Forster*  
Chair – African Democracy Forum