

Congolese journalist denied provisional release after months in detention

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A court in the Democratic Republic of Congo has rejected an appeal for the provisional release of journalist Stanis Bujakera, who has been in detention for more than five months.



Source: www.unsplash.com

Bujakera, who works for international media outlets including *Reuters*, was detained on 8 September and later charged with spreading false information about the killing of a prominent opposition politician. He denies the charges.

In its ruling on Tuesday, the court did not provide a reason for the rejection of the appeal to release him from Kinshasa central prison. The court had previously rejected several other appeals for his release, also without giving a reason.

"We were surprised that our request for the provisional release of our client was rejected yesterday," one of Bujakera's lawyers, Yana Ndikulu, said on Wednesday.

The next hearing is scheduled on 8 March.

"*Reuters* opposes the continuing detention of journalist Stanis Bujakera in Congo and repeats its call for his immediate

release," a *Reuters* spokesperson said.



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"Journalists must be free to report the news in the public interest without harassment or harm, wherever they are."

Bujakera was detained in connection with an article published by French news magazine *Jeune Afrique* about the circumstances of the death of Cherubin Okende, a former transport minister whose body was found in Kinshasa on 13 July.

Local and international rights groups have condemned Bujakera's detention, calling it an attack on press freedom, and demanded his release.

Congo's President Felix Tshisekedi said during a press conference on 22 February that Bujakera was a victim of what he called Congo's "sick justice", adding that he would "poke my nose into the matter."

"Because of the slowness, perhaps this young man is rotting away," Tshisekedi said.

Responding to a *Reuters*' request for comment on Wednesday, Tshisekedi's spokeswoman, Tina Salama, said: "The president of the Republic has been very clear and has expressed himself several times on Stanis's case.

"That said we cannot comment on judicial decisions as there is a separation of powers that has to be respected. The president only intervenes within the limits of his powers."

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