

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

ITUC OnLine

136/110711

Côte d'Ivoire: ITUC calls for immediate release of Basile Mahan Gahé

Brussels, 11 July 2011 (ITUC OnLine): Basile Mahan Gahé, general secretary of Dignité, was transferred on Saturday morning from the capital, Abidjan, to a town in the north of the country. The ITUC has reiterated its grave concern for his welfare and has called for his immediate release.

In May 2011, the trade union leader, who had received death threats, was abducted from his home by armed men. (See previous ITUC OnLine <http://www.ituc-csi.org/cote-d-ivoire-arrestation-du.html?lang=fr>). He was identified after being held for several days in solitary confinement in a police station in Abidjan.

The ITUC has repeatedly called for the trade unionist's release. The International Committee of the Red Cross was called on, which was able to ensure his well-being. Two International Labour Organisation (ILO) missions have been to Côte d'Ivoire, the second at the end of June, accompanied by Mody Guiro, vice president of the ITUC and president of ITUC-Africa. The country's various trade union centres joined together during the mission to reiterate their unanimous plea for Basile Mahan Gahé's release. Just as the ILO delegation reached the country, the trade union leader was transferred to the Pergola hotel, which had been transformed into a place of detention. The mission noted the absence of any judicial process. The authorities also confirmed the trade unionist's assertion that he had never been in possession of weapons.

On Saturday 9 July at 5 am, the trade unionist was unexpectedly transferred to Boundiali, in the north of the country, several hundred kilometres from the capital. His renewed isolation has raised fresh fears for his well-being and safety. According to the rare news filtered out through unofficial channels, he is reportedly being held under a particularly harsh prison regime, receiving only one meal at the end of the day and being forced to perform heavy physical exercise on an empty stomach in the morning.

ITUC affiliated organisations and global union federations in very large numbers have joined the trade union campaign calling for his release. For Mody Guiro, president of ITUC-Africa and vice president of the ITUC, who accompanied the ILO mission, international pressure must be kept up. "It is with shock and disappointment that the news has been received of this transfer, which is totally inconsistent with the line taken by the Ivorian authorities in the talks with the ILO mission. Hopes had been raised of Basile's imminent release. The time has come for peace and reconciliation, so that the implementation of the decent work agenda can truly become the top priority of the day."

"Côte d'Ivoire, as a country governed by the rule of law, has an obligation to respect the fundamental rights of all, including trade unionists," recalled ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

See the Amnesty International appeal for Basile Mahan Gahé's release:  
<http://www.amnesty.org/fr/library/asset/AFR31/005/2011/fr/6107d48b-edeb-4300-888e-5832876f27d1/afr310052011fr.html>

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 151 countries and territories and has 305 national affiliates. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

For more information, contact the ITUC Press Department on: +32 2 224 02 04 or +32 476 621 018.

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