

Press release, 14 July 2015

Human rights activist sentenced to two years of prison in Chad

Djeralar Miankeol, a human rights activist and director of the civil society organisation “Association Ngaoubourandi” has been sentenced to two years of prison and a fine on charges of contempt of court on 7 July 2015. The *AK Rohstoffe*, a network of German civil society organisations, asks for the immediate release of Miankeol, who’s health condition is worrying.

On 7 June 2015, Djeralar Miankeol had given a radio interview, in which he spoke about the problem of land grabbing by elites, as well as the corruption in the justice and administrative sectors. On 15 June, he was questioned on this interview by the public prosecutor of the Logone Occidental region who then ordered his arrest. He was brought to the “Brigade de Recherche” prison of Moundou. Only the next day did a judge from the court in Moundou issue an arrest warrant for “insulting the judiciary” (*outrage à magistrat*). He was thereupon transferred to the prison in Moundou where he remained for two weeks without being charged. The audition took place two weeks later, on 30 June: whereas the prosecutor demanded 18 months of imprisonment and a fee of FCFA100,000 (approx. €150), the lawyers asked for his acquittal. On 7 July, Djeralar Miankeol was sentenced to two years imprisonment and a fine. The judgement was more severe than that pleaded for by the prosecutor. The arguments brought forward by the lawyers, who also showed procedural errors, were not taken into account.

In Chad, an international consortium (consisting of ExxonMobil, Chevron and Petronas) started oil production in 2003, with the political backing of the World Bank. In spite of a numerous measures taken by the World Bank, it has not been able to prevent negative effects of the Chad-Cameroon Oil & Pipeline Project in the oil producing region. The *Association Ngaoubourandi*, for which Miankeol is working, sheds light on the land take by elites and it attempts to peacefully solve injustices and conflicts that have occurred following the exploitation of oil. The conflict between farmers and herders is one that has become more acute because of increasing land scarcity due to oil exploitation.

The entire judicial procedure against Miankeol shows how the state attempts to intimidate civil society activists, aiming to impede their work. The *AK Rohstoffe* condemns the arrest and punishment of Djeralar Miankeol and demands his immediate and unconditional release. **“Djeralar Miankeol’s physical and psychological wellbeing have to be ensured. The climate of harassment of civil society activists in Chad has to stop all together”** demands **Martin Petry**, freelance consultant with good connections in Chad. **“German and European policies for sustainable resource use need to include the protection of human rights. This is particularly true in the case of increasing conflicts over access to land following resource extraction”** emphasises **Lena Guesnet**, researcher at BICC.

The *AK Rohstoffe* is a network of German civil society organisations advocating human rights, social standards and environmental protection. Since 2008, the *AK Rohstoffe* holds regular meetings and discusses approaches for sustainable resources policies, given the negative effects from resource exploitation. Since May 2013 there is a coordinating office in Berlin.

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