



The UIA Institute for the Rule of Law

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## STATEMENT

Paris, 15 September 2025

**UIA-IROL expresses its deep concern regarding the abduction and continued arbitrary detention of Congolese lawyer Médard Palankoy**

The Institute for the Rule of Law of the *Union Internationale des Avocats* (UIA-IROL) expresses its deep concern regarding the abduction and continued arbitrary detention of Médard Palankoy, a Congolese lawyer registered with the Kinshasa-Gombe Bar Association.

According to the information received, on 14 March 2025, Mr. Médard Palankoy was abducted from his law firm by agents of the National Cyber Defence Council, without a warrant or judicial order. Since that date, he has been held incommunicado, without access to his family, legal counsel, or a judge.

In an increasingly concerning context for the legal profession in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mr. Palankoy's situation appears to be part of a recurring and troubling pattern of arbitrary arrests and prolonged incommunicado detentions of lawyers, seemingly linked to the exercise of their professional duties.

UIA-IROL recalls that the independence and freedom of lawyers are indispensable to the Rule of Law and to the effective guarantee of access to justice. Any practice that could undermine the respect for fundamental rights and safeguards for lawyers should be therefore deplored.

In this regard, UIA-IROL reminds that, in accordance with the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers and the Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Fair Trial and Legal Assistance in Africa, it is the responsibility of the Democratic Republic of Congo to ensure that lawyers are able to perform their professional functions "without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference" and that they should not be prosecuted or punished for "any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics."<sup>1</sup>

These instruments further provide that "lawyers shall not be identified with their clients or their clients' causes as a result of discharging their functions."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>[Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers](#), adopted by the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Havana, Cuba, in 1990, Principle 16 and [Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Fair Trial and Legal Assistance in Africa](#), adopted by African Commission on Human and People's Rights in 2003, Article I. b).

<sup>2</sup>Principle 18 of the UN Basic Principles and Principle I(g) of the African Principles and Guidelines.

UIA-IROL further recalls that the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo guarantees that:

- any person who has been arrested must be immediately informed of the reasons for his/her arrest and of any accusation made against him/her, and this in a language which he/she understands; a person kept in custody must be immediately informed of his/her rights; a person kept in custody has the right to immediately contact his/her family and his/her counsel. (Article 18),
- all persons have the right to have their case heard by a competent judge within a reasonable time; the right to defense is organized and guaranteed. (Article 19).

In addition, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by the Democratic Republic of Congo, enshrines in Article 9 that “(e)veryone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law (...)”.

UIA-IROL calls on the Congolese authorities to bring Mr. Palankoy’s situation into conformity with the Democratic Republic of Congo’s obligations under national and international law and to release him without delay. UIA-IROL further urges the authorities to take all necessary measures to guarantee Mr. Palankoy’s physical and psychological safety under all circumstances and to ensure full respect for all his fair trial rights, including the right to access a lawyer of his choosing.

More generally, UIA-IROL calls on the Congolese authorities to ensure that lawyers are able to carry out their professional activities safely without fear of reprisals, intimidation, or unlawful interference.

UIA-IROL expresses its solidarity with Médard Palankoy and UIA-IROL takes this opportunity to offer its support for all Congolese lawyers who continue to assume their critical role challenging circumstances.

UIA-IROL will continue to monitor this situation closely.

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#### **More about UIA-IROL**

*The Institute for the Rule of Law of the Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA-IROL) promotes the Rule of Law and supports and defends, in particular, (1) lawyers, judges and human rights defenders who are harassed, threatened and/or persecuted in the exercise of their professions, (2) the independence of the legal and judicial professions, and (3) the UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, especially in defense of human rights.*

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