



global witness

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Global Witness calls for immediate independent inquiry into Congolese activist's death

It is with great sadness that Global Witness learned of the death of Floribert Chebeya, Executive Director of the Congolese human rights organisation, *Voix des Sans Voix* (Voice of the Voiceless – VSV). On 2 June 2010, Floribert Chebeya Bahizire was found dead on the outskirts of Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Mr Chebeya had been summoned to meet the Inspector General of the national police in Kinshasa on 1 June and disappeared shortly after departing to visit the Central Police Station. *L'Observatoire pour la protection des défenseurs des droits de l'Homme*, a joint program of the International Federation for Human Rights and the World Organisation against Torture, had issued a statement on 2 June expressing their concern at the disappearance of Mr Chebeya and his driver, Mr Bazana, also a member of VSV. Mr Chebeya's body was later found in his car.

"We are deeply shocked by Chebeya's death. He was a leading human rights activist and a campaigner for democracy whose work was widely respected. He will be greatly missed," said Patrick Alley, Director of Global Witness.

Chebeya, a prominent human rights activist for several decades, had been harassed by the Congolese authorities on numerous occasions in relation to his work. Most recently, in March 2009, he was beaten, illegally arrested and detained for two days by the national police, along with two other activists.

Global Witness supports the numerous calls by Congolese and international human rights organisations and the United Nations for a credible, independent and thorough investigation into his death and the disappearance of Mr Bazana.

Global Witness has observed that acts of intimidation and attacks by Congolese authorities have been often perpetrated against journalists, human rights activists and other members of civil society. Serious charges carrying heavy sentences, such as the charge of threatening state security, have been used to silence criticism of the government.

Global Witness expresses its deepest condolences to Mr Chebeya's family, friends and colleagues.

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Global Witness investigates and campaigns to prevent natural resource-related conflict and corruption and associated environmental and human rights abuses.