

Congo journalist detained regarding *Jeune Afrique* article, magazine says

A Congolese journalist working for international media outlets has been detained in Kinshasa on suspicion of spreading false information about the killing of a prominent opposition politician in an article published by *Jeune Afrique*, the French news magazine said.



Source: www.unsplash.com

Stanis Bujakera, who also contributes to *Reuters*, was detained at the airport in the capital Kinshasa on Friday night as he was about to travel to the eastern city of Lubumbashi, *Jeune Afrique* said in statements published on its website.

False rumours

Since then, he has been brought repeatedly before a commission of inquiry investigating the death of former transport minister and opposition lawmaker, Cherubin Okende, whose body was found on 13 July, it said.

He is accused of "spreading false rumours" and the "dissemination of false information" about the case, the magazine said. But it said the article in question did not carry his name, and "he cannot be held responsible" for its content.

"They are trying to force him to reveal sources," *Jeune Afrique*'s managing editor, Francois Soudan, told *Reuters*. "Stanis is not the author of this article. It is not signed Stanis; it is signed *Jeune Afrique*."



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Late on Monday, Bujakera was questioned by a prosecutor who issued a provisional arrest warrant allowing him to be detained for five days pending further investigation, a lawyer for the journalist, Herve Diakiese, said. The warrant has not been released publicly.

Democratic Republic of Congo's communications minister, Patrick Muyaya, and spokespeople for the police and state prosecutor's office did not respond to phone calls and text messages seeking comment. Tina Salama, a spokesperson for the presidency, said she could not comment on the matter because it was in the hands of the judiciary.

Possible involvement

The accusations relate to an article published on *Jeune Afrique's* website on 31 August about the circumstances of Okende's death, the magazine said. The article said an internal report by the National Intelligence Agency (ANR) dated 14 July accused military intelligence agents of possible involvement in the killing.

The Congolese authorities dispute the authenticity of the report, *Jeune Afrique* said.

"They sent us, a few hours after Stanis' arrest, a letter denouncing 'the false information published on the basis of a report wrongly attributed to the ANR' ... and say they regret 'that media deemed professionally credible have allowed themselves to be led astray to the point of relaying a document with misleading content'," it said in a statement.

Soudan told *Reuters* that *Jeune Afrique* had verified the document but did not say how. *Reuters* has seen the government's letter but not the report attributed to the ANR and could not reach the agency for comment. A spokesperson for the interior ministry, which sent *Jeune Afrique* the letter dated 5 September did not respond to questions from *Reuters*.

Local and international rights groups including Human Rights Watch have expressed concern about Bujakera's detention, calling it an attack on press freedom.

"Reuters opposes the detention of journalist Stanis Bujakera in Congo. We are seeking further information from Congolese authorities," a Reuters spokesperson said.

Bujakera's lawyers said they submitted a request to the prosecutor's office for his provisional release on Tuesday. There was no immediate word on the outcome.

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