

16 December 2020

Madagascar: Human rights defender Clovis Razafimalala on trial

On 17 December 2020, the hearing of human rights defender **Clovis Razafimalala** is due to take place at the Court of Appeal of Tamatave. Clovis Razafimalala is facing charges of rebellion, destruction of public documents and goods, and arson.

[Clovis Razafimalala](#) is a human rights defender who advocates against the illegal trafficking of rosewood and other timber from Madagascar. The environmental rights defender is the coordinator of the Lampogno Coalition, a coalition of organisations working for environmental justice and fighting against the illegal trafficking of natural resources in Madagascar. Clovis Razafimalala is also the regional coordinator of Coalition Nationale de Plaidoyer Environnemental (National Environmental Advocacy Coalition- CNPE).

On 15 September 2016, at around 5 pm, human rights defender Clovis Razafimalala was arrested at his home by gendarmes and brought to the criminal research brigade of the gendarmerie of Tamatave, which is located 400 kilometres away from his city of residence Maroantsetra. The human rights defender was accused of encouraging protesters to loot an administrative building in Maroantsetra on 14 September 2016, along with eight other people, even though he was not present at the protest. On 26 September 2016, Clovis Razafimalala was subsequently charged with rebellion, destruction of public documents and goods, and arson by the Court of First Instance of Tamatave and transferred to the central prison of Tamatave.

On 24 July 2017, the Court of Tamatave acquitted Clovis Razafimalala of the charge of rebellion. The environmental rights defender was released on the same day from Tamatave central prison, after spending more than 10 months in detention. Despite several testimonies stating that the defender was not at the scene during the demonstration, he was found guilty of destruction of public documents and goods and arson. Clovis Razafimalala was condemned to a suspended sentence of five years imprisonment, a suspended fine of \$25.29 (€20.81) and to pay, along with the eight other people accused, \$12 000 (approximately €9872) in damages.

Several irregularities were reported during the trial, including the fact that none of the witnesses called by Clovis Razafimalala's lawyer were summoned to appear, and that the only witnesses who were heard were accusation witnesses. The human rights defender appealed the court's decision. On 9 August 2019, the Court of Cassation issued a ruling quashing the decision of the Court of Tamatave and requested that another jury retry the case, as two of the co-accused were absent during the first trial. Human rights defender Clovis Razafimalala will be tried again on all three charges of rebellion, destruction of public documents and goods, and arson on 17 December 2020 at the Court of Appeal of Tamatave.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the charges against human rights defender Clovis Razafimalala. Front Line Defenders believes that he is targeted solely as a result of his legitimate work in defence of human and environmental rights.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Madagascar to:

1. Drop all charges against Clovis Razafimalala and cease all judicial harassment against him as Front Line Defenders believes that he is targeted solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;

2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Madagascar are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.