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### **Democratic Republic of Congo: Killing of human rights defender Obedi Karafulu**

On 19 July 2023, human rights defender **Obedi Karafulu** was shot and killed in his house by unidentified men in Bishusha, Rutshuru territory in North Kivu, a region controlled by the M23 rebels.

[Obedi Karafulu](#) was a human rights defender and president of the committee of former workers of the SICIA concession of Bishusha. He was playing a key role in a long-running land dispute involving more than 30,000 former workers at that company and concessionaires. He was also known for his tireless commitment to the defence of land rights.

The Committee is composed of former workers of the forest exploitation logging concession SICIA LUBOGA axe KITSHANGA Masisi-Rutshuru (International Society of Agricultural Trades and Industries) located within the territory of Rutshuru, in North Kivu. The Committee of former workers advocates for social justice, accountability and payment of compensation owed to former workers by the SICIA forest exploitation concession.

Before his killing, the human rights defender Obedi Karafulu filed several [complaints](#) about the numerous death threats he and other members of his organisation were subject to over the past four years. None of these complaints were ever investigated.

In addition to the death threats, in 2021 the human rights defender was falsely accused of criminal association and participation in insurrectionist movements, leading to his week-long detention at the Goma central prison.

Front Line Defenders strongly condemns the killing of Obedi Karafulu, as it believes he has been targeted solely as a result of his legitimate work in defence of human rights and his crucial role supporting and representing the former workers. Human rights defenders in the Democratic Republic of Congo work in an extremely hostile and insecure context due to the complex humanitarian crisis and conflict around natural resources. This hostility and insecurity in areas where there is ongoing conflict increases the risk for human rights defenders to be targeted with attacks and killings.

### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities of the Democratic Republic of Congo to:**

1. Strongly condemn the killing of Obedi Karafulu, as it is believed to be directly motivated by his peaceful and legitimate human rights work;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Obedi Karafulu with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that human rights defenders in the Democratic Republic of Congo are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free from all restrictions.