

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Tuesday, 4th June, 2024**

**Abduction of a Human Rights Defender from the Kingfisher project area by UPDF**

Kampala, Uganda - Stephen Kwikiriza, a member of the Kingfisher community working with the Environment Governance Institute (EGI) in the oil project area, was abducted in Kampala by the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) on June 4, 2024, under alarming circumstances. The Kingfisher project is an oil project in western Uganda on the shores of Lake Albert, developed by the Chinese company China National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC), of which TotalEnergies is the main shareholder.

Stephen Kwikiriza went into town on the morning of June 4, 2024. His wife later reported that he was abducted by UPDF officers in plain clothes. He managed to send a text message to his colleague from EGI, Samuel Okulony, confirming his abduction by plain-clothed UPDF officers. No further communication has been received since. All his known phone numbers are currently off.

Stephen's whereabouts and condition are unknown. A legal team is actively calling and visiting various military and police detention centers to locate him and intervene accordingly.

The Stop EACOP coalition members are even more concerned as, since mid-March, Stephen had been staying at a Safe House in an undisclosed location due to threats from the UPDF deployed in Kingfisher.

This follows the arrest of seven Ugandans on May 27, 2024 which took place outside the Chinese embassy in Kampala. They were arrested while attempting to deliver a petition outlining the adverse effects of the oil project, including the loss of their land, environmental degradation, and violations of human and community rights.

The StopEACOP coalition and its national and international partners condemn this latest abduction and all the recent escalation of intimidations and arrests and urges the Ugandan authorities to release the human rights defender.

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