Reporters Without Borders: UGANDA Former radio presenter freed on bail but still facing possible trial

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UGANDA

Former radio presenter freed on bail but still facing possible trial

Augustine Okello, a former Rhino FM morning radio show presenter in the northern city of Lira, was finally released on bail on 26 July after being held for 13 months in pre-trial detention, but is still facing the possibility of trial on a charge of treason, which carries the death penalty.

Local observers said the high court judge set very harsh conditions for his release – bail of 3,200 euros, obligation to report regularly to the police station and high court in Lira, his home town, and a ban of leaving Lira without permission except to report once a month to the high court in Kampala.

“Okello’s conditional release is good news for him and his family but we continue to be very worried,” Reporters Without Borders said. “He has spent more than a year in pre-trial detention, his right to be presumed innocent has not been respected and other fundamental rights have been flouted. The fact that no trial date has been set is disturbing and outrageous, and increases the pressure on this journalist, who has already suffered enough.”

Also known as “Rouks,” Okello was arrested in July 2011 in the course of an investigation into a dissident colonel’s death. He was formally charged with treason on 1 August 2011 because of alleged subversive activities and alleged involvement with opposition parties with supposed links to armed groups. More information: http://en.rsf.org/uganda-anti-terrorist-unit-holding-radio-26-07-2011,40698.html