



Department of Social Development and World Peace

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • FAX 202-541-3339
WEBSITE: WWW.USCCB.ORG/SDWP

April 13, 2006

His Excellency Serge Mombouli
4891 Colorado Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20011-3731

BY FAX: 202-726-1860

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I am writing today to join our voices with those of our brother bishops in the Republic of the Congo to express our deep concern over the arbitrary arrest and detention by the police in Pointe-Noire of Messrs. Brice Makosso and Christian Mounzeo, who have now been held in custody since Friday, April 7, 2006, without charge.

As indicated in their declaration of April 10, 2006 (see enclosed), the Conference of Bishops of the Congo (CEC) is particularly alarmed by the numerous irregularities in judicial procedure leading to this incarceration that would suggest other, less explicit motives for this affair. The U.S. bishops share the apprehension that these two men may be suffering harassment as a result of their tireless efforts to ensure a measure of transparency in the management of your country's abundant natural resources, rather than for any sort of malfeasance.

It is therefore with a sincere regard for justice and due process of law that the U.S. bishops request you to convey to your Government an urgent appeal for the immediate and unconditional release of Messrs. Makosso and Mounzeo, as well as for an end to all forms of harassment of, or reprisals against, these two defenders of human rights.

During a fact-finding trip in August 2000 to learn about the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons, I had an opportunity to see first-hand the plight of many Congolese people who yearned to see their country at peace and governed by the rule of law.

Please accept this expression of gratitude for your gracious assistance in bringing this matter of deep concern to the attention of the Government of the Republic of the Congo.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Policy

Encl.