

protect humanitarians



Free Joseph Figueira Martin! **Humanitarian arbitrarily detained and tortured in the Central African Republic**

Joseph, a Belgian-Portuguese humanitarian, has been held in arbitrary detention for over a year without trial or access to medical care. His life is in danger. Take action to demand his immediate release.

Act Now. Sign. Share.

The Arrest of Joseph Figueira Martin

On 26 May 2024, Joseph Figueira Martin, a Belgian-Portuguese humanitarian, was arrested in Zémio, a town in the east of the Central African Republic.

He was abducted by the Wagner Group on the pretext of holding two passports, while working for the non-profit organisation Family Health International (FHI 360). He was tortured for several days before being transferred to Bangui, where he was handed over to the Central African Republic authorities and subsequently detained at the *Office central pour la répression du banditisme* (OCRB) on accusations of alleged espionage. Joseph was charged on July 5, 2024, and was transferred the same day, from the OCRB to the military prison of *Camp de Roux*.

Joseph's continued arbitrary detention without due process constitutes a violation of his human rights and international law.

Detention Conditions

Joseph has been tortured, threatened with death, and kept in inhumane conditions without proper access to justice, consular assistance, or urgent medical care. **His health has deteriorated severely**, and a request for conditional release has gone unanswered, in violation of Central African Republic's law.

Joseph's Work

At the time of his arrest, Joseph was working for the NGO FHI 360, to help design a program aimed at reducing poverty, expanding economic opportunities, and preventing gender-based violence.

International Mobilisation

On 10 July 2025, the **European Parliament adopted a resolution** strongly condemning Joseph's arbitrary detention and calling for his immediate and unconditional release. **Family Health International** – the non-profit organisation he was working for – and **Human Rights Watch** issued statements denouncing his detention and demanding his immediate release.

On 19 May 2025, the **United Nations Working Group** on the use of mercenaries as a means to violate Human Rights sent a letter to the Belgian, Portuguese, Central African as well as Russian Governments, to question the arbitrary detention of Joseph Figueira Martin. To this date, the letter remains unanswered.

Protect Humanitarians, together with Joseph's family, is now pushing for greater visibility of the case and broader international support, calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

Our Demands

We call for:

- The **immediate and unconditional release** of Joseph Figueira Martin.
- **Full respect for his human rights**, including access to legal defence, consular assistance, and adequate healthcare.
- **Justice and accountability** for arbitrary detention, acts of torture and inhumane treatment he endured.
- **Targeted sanctions** towards all the individuals who participated in the effort of Joseph's arbitrary detention in CAR.

All States and parties to armed conflict must respect and ensure respect for applicable international humanitarian law protecting humanitarian workers in all circumstances. They must respect and protect the human rights of humanitarian workers.

Joseph is a dedicated humanitarian worker who dedicates his life to helping those in need. Humanitarian workers must be protected. Always. Everywhere.