April 21, 2020

To: Your Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa President of the African Union
To: Excellencies President of Africans countries

Dear African Presidents,

We the undersigned organizations and movements operating on the African continent and in the African Diaspora - towards promoting justice, peace, and dignity - respectfully ask that you release all Human Rights defenders, journalists and political prisoners currently detained in your respective countries.

You are making history with every decision you are taking in the context of The COVID-19 pandemic which is getting worse by the day. The World Health Organization has recommended that governments release some prisoners in order to reduce carceral populations as incarcerated persons are at higher risks of contracting the virus due to the conditions of detention, underlying health conditions and difficulty to observe social distancing in such closed spaces.

Many of you have already pardoned thousands of prisoners across the continent and we applaud your leadership and concern for the well-being of your citizens. Nonetheless, there are hundreds of people who are deserving of your pardon that are still incarcerated. They are Human Rights defenders, journalists, and activists whose families, friends, and communities are rightfully worried about them.

Many of these prisoners have been detained for months to years without trial which violates their right to a fair trial and a sizable number have fragile health as a result of poor living conditions. The COVID-19 is a matter of life and death and no one deserves to die as a result of their dissident voice.

This is an unusual time and we need a humanitarian act to get through this period. We encourage you to take the boldest action by putting the lives and all your citizens, including your opponents and critics first. We invite you to take actions that will forever put your name in the history of this pandemic as those who made the difference and put Africa at the front leading humanity back to caring for each other.

We implore you to give peace a chance, and let go of all the political prisoners.

Sincerely,
Africans Rising
Committee to Protect Journalists
Centro de Estudos Ufolo para a Boa Governação
CIVICUS
Afrika Youth Movement
Solidarity Uganda
NVDA
Afrikakajom
WAFRICA Guinée
Friends of Angola
Rainbow/PUSH Coalition
Torture Abolition And Survivors Support Coalition International
Togolese Civil League
Do It With Boldness Foundation
ITUC-Africa
WACSI
CAJUST