

Gabonese lawyer Augustine Lobelle Yembi who was arrested at Kigali International Airport after physically assaulting a RwandAir supervisor during a layover is released.

Yembi, was transiting through Kigali International Airport on September 3, left the terminal for a nearby hotel to wait out a long layover before his connecting flight.

When he came back through security, a RwandAir employee asked to see his passport and boarding pass, a routine check. Yembi's response wasn't routine at all. Footage that later spread across, social media showing him slapping the employee across the face during the exchange. The worker didn't hit back.

Rwandan police arrested Yembi on the spot. He spent the next three days in custody, awaiting a court date that never came. On September 6, Rwanda released him, and rather than face Rwandan justice, he was handed straight to Gabonese officials waiting to take him home.

Gabon's National Assembly Speaker, Michel Régis Onanga Ndiaye, broke the news to lawmakers at a bureau meeting in Libreville's Palais Léon Mba, framing it as the product of quiet diplomacy between the two governments.

Gabon's Foreign Minister, Marie-Édith Tassyla-Ye-Doumbeneny, went further on television the next day, crediting the release to what she called the "excellence" of Gabon-Rwanda relations, and, more pointedly, to the personal friendship between presidents Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema and Paul Kagame.

Yembi, an independent lawmaker elected in 2025 to represent Lolo-Bouenguidi in Ogooué-Lolo province, now heads back into a different kind of uncertainty.

Gabonese parliamentary rules shield sitting members from prosecution without a formal judicial referral, and the Assembly says it's still waiting on one before it can even consider whether to strip his immunity.

Nothing about his legal fate has actually been decided, only where it will now be decided.

Neither RwandAir nor the Rwandan government has issued a public statement on the case. The entire account of what happened at the gate exists because someone filmed it.