

EXTRA 168/99 Fear of "disappearance" / Extrajudicialexecution

CAMEROON Mr Tchambou, member of the *Mouvement pour la défense des droits de l'homme et des libertés* (MDDHL), Movement for the Defence of Human Rights and Liberties

Amnesty International is seriously concerned about the safety of Mr Tchambou, a member of a non-governmental human rights organization, the *Mouvement pour la défense des droits de l'homme et des libertés* (MDDHL), Movement for the Defence of Human Rights and Liberties, who is being held incommunicado by the security forces.

Mr Tchambou was arrested early in the morning of 21 November 1999 by the gendarmerie, the paramilitary police, in Maroua, Far-North Province. He was visited by MDDHL members at the gendarmerie headquarters before being transferred later that day into the custody of a special unit of the security services, known as the *brigade anti-gang*. He is now held at the *brigade anti-gang* detention centre in the Palar district of Maroua. Subsequent visits have been refused.

He has not been charged with any offence and the reasons for his arrest are unclear. Under Cameroon law, he should be referred to a judicial authority to be either charged or released within 72 hours of his arrest. He is believed to have been arrested solely because of his association with the MDDHL and his activities in defence of human rights.

The *brigade anti-gang*, a joint unit of military and gendarmerie officers, was first deployed in March 1998 to combat a long-standing problem of armed robbery in the north of Cameroon. Since then it has been responsible for the extrajudicial executions of several hundred suspected armed robbers (for further information, see *Cameroon: Extrajudicial executions in North and Far-North Provinces*, AI Index: AFR 17/16/98, December 1998).

Members of the MDDHL have been repeatedly threatened and harassed as a result of their investigation and exposure of extrajudicial executions by the *brigade anti-gang*. The home in Maroua of the President of the MDDHL, Abdoulaye Math, was searched twice by the security forces during his absence abroad in December 1998. In early May 1999 the *brigade anti-gang* ambushed and threatened members of the MDDHL who were investigating extrajudicial executions in Mayo-Sava Division, Far-North Province. Later that month they went to the homes of Abdoulaye Math and Semdi Soulaye, another MDDHL member. Both men were away at the time. Abdoulaye Math's home was reported to have been surrounded by some 18 armed members of the *brigade anti-gang* who pointed their guns at a member of his family. Abdoulaye Math and Semdi Soulaye fled to Yaoundé, the capital in central Cameroon. The security forces surrounded Abdoulaye Math's house and intimidated his family during the following three nights. Both men subsequently returned to Maroua (see EXTRA 128/99, AFR 17/07/99, 2 June 1999 and follow up).

The whereabouts and fate of a photographer, Alioum Aminou, who was reported to have distributed photographs of victims of extrajudicial executions, is unknown since his arrest by the *brigade anti-gang* in Maroua in October 1998. It is feared that he has been extrajudicially executed.

There has been no official investigation into the extrajudicial executions of criminal suspects by the *brigade anti-gang* which have taken place since March 1998.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in French, English or your own language:

- requesting the reasons for the arrest in Maroua, Far-North Province, on 21 November 1999 of Mr Tchambou, a member of the *Mouvement pour la défense des droits de l'homme et des libertés* (MDDHL), Movement for the Defence of Human Rights and Liberties;
- urging his immediate and unconditional release if, as it appears, he has been arrested solely because of his association with the MDDHL and his activities in defence of human rights;
- urging that his safety be guaranteed while in detention;
- requesting that he be allowed visits from members of his family, a lawyer and a doctor.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of State for Defence

M. Amadou Ali

Ministre d'Etat délégué à la Présidence chargé de la Défense

Palais de la Présidence

1000 Yaoundé

République du Cameroun

Telegrams:Ministre d'Etat Défense, Présidence, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Faxes: + 237 20 33 06

e-mails:celcom@camnet.cm

Salutation:Monsieur le Ministre d'Etat / Dear Minister of State

Head of National Security

M. Luc René Bell

Délégué général à la Sûreté nationale

Sûreté nationale

1000 Yaoundé

République du Cameroon

Telegrams:M. Bell, Sûreté nationale, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Faxes:c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs + 237 20 11 33

Salutation:Monsieur le Délégué général / Dear Mr Bell

M. Laurent Ezzo

Ministre de la Justice, Garde des Sceaux

Ministère de la Justice

1000 Yaoundé

Cameroon

Telegrams:Ministre Justice, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Faxes:+ 237 22 01 97

e-mails:celcom@camnet.cm

Salutation:Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Le Messenger (newspaper), **faxes:+ 237 42 02 14**

Cameroon Tribune (newspaper), **faxes:+ 237 30 43 62**

and to diplomatic representatives of Cameroon accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 December 1999.