

18 December 1998

Further information on UA 113/98 (AFR 17/07/98, 15 April 1998) and follow-ups (AFR 17/11/98, 14 August 1998; AFR 17/12/98, 10 September 1998 and AFR 17/14/98, 29 October 1998) - Torture and ill-treatment / Health concern

CAMEROON Ebenezer Akwanga, aged 26, student and President of the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL)
John Bah Atoh, aged 40 (released)
Fon Peter Fonyam, aged 50
Prisca Fonyam (f), aged 44 (released)
Bika Iderisu, aged 22
Grace Yaya Kwei (f), aged 38
Wilson Che Neba, aged 19
Philip Tete, aged 59
Nseke Stanley Tete, aged 29 (released)
Patrick Yimbu, aged 36
Lawrence Fai (died 31 August 1998)

and new names: Ndifet Zacharia Khan, aged 56
Fidelis Nyankwe, aged 40
Ndum Anoh Robertson, aged 68
Ndifon Joseph Tangu, aged 58

Forty-two prisoners are still being held without charge or trial in appalling conditions in connection with attacks by armed groups on towns in North-West Province in late March 1997.

Several are seriously ill either because of torture or ill-treatment at the time of their arrest or because of a lack of medical care while in detention.

Ten are known to have died in detention, most recently Lawrence Fai, who died on 31 August 1998 after finally being admitted to hospital.

Thirty-five are held in the Central Prison, Yaoundé, known as Nkondengui prison, and seven in the Principal Prison in Mfou. Prison conditions are extremely harsh, with severe overcrowding, inadequate hygiene and sanitary facilities and seriously deficient diet and medical care.

Reports indicate that Ebenezer Akwanga is now too weak to stand up, that Grace Yaya Kwei needs medical care after an operation, Fidelis Nyankwe has a fractured arm and swollen legs, Ndum Anoh Robertson has tuberculosis and that Ndifon Joseph Tangu is a diabetic who needs a special diet and regular medical attention. Ndifet Zacharia Khan has had toes on both feet amputated as a result of severe beatings at the time of his arrest and has now been returned to Nkondengui prison from a military hospital.

Around 20 of those arrested during March and April 1997 who remained in detention are now known to have been unconditionally released: several in February, August and October and another seven on 21 November 1998. These include John Bah Atoh, Prisca Fonyam and Nseke Stanley Tete.

The 42 were among some 60 prisoners who remained held in connection with the attacks by armed groups on towns in North-West Province in late March 1997, during which 10 people, including three paramilitary police officers (*gendarmes*), were killed. No group claimed responsibility but the authorities attributed the attacks to members of a group supporting independence for

Cameroon's two English-speaking provinces, North-West and South-West Provinces.

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

- welcoming the unconditional release of some 20 of those held without charge or trial in connection with the events in North-West Province in March 1997;
- acknowledging the government's responsibility to bring to justice those responsible for criminal acts, but expressing concern that the remaining 42 prisoners have now been held for up to 21 months without charge or trial;
- urging that they be promptly charged and brought to trial in accordance with international standards, and that any against whom there is no evidence of a recognizably criminal offence be released;
- expressing serious concern about the health and safety of the remaining prisoners, including Ebenezer Akwanga, Ndifet Zacharia Khan, Grace Yaya Kwei, Fidelis Nyankwe, Ndum Anoh Robertson and Ndifon Joseph Tangu, held at the Central Prison, Nkondengui, in Yaoundé or at the Principal Prison in Mfou;
- urging that they be treated humanely in accordance with international standards for the treatment of prisoners and, in particular, that they be protected from torture and ill-treatment and receive all necessary medical care as a matter of urgency, including admittance to hospital if necessary;
- reminding the government of its obligation under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified in 1984, to guarantee fundamental rights which are also enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including Article 5: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment", and Article 10: "Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him."

APPEALS TO:

President

Son Excellence M. Paul Biya, Président de la République
Palais de l'Unité, 1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telegrams: President, Yaounde, Cameroon

Faxes: + 237 20 33 06

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President Biya

Minister of Justice

M. Laurent Eso, Ministre de la Justice, Garde des Sceaux, Ministère de la Justice, 1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Yaounde, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of the Interior,

M. Samson Ename Ename, Ministre de l'Administration territoriale, Ministère de l'Administration territoriale

1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telegrams: Minister Interior, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Dr Solomon Nfor Gwei, President, National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, PO Box 20317, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Cameroon Post, BP 1981, Yaoundé, Cameroon

The Herald, BP 3659 Messa, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Le Messenger, BP 5925, 226 Boulevard de la Liberté, Douala, Cameroon

La Nouvelle Expression, BP 15333, 12 rue Prince de Galles, Douala, Cameroon

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 29 January 1998.