

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death in custody

5 August 1992

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: Dr Jean-Claude Konjugo, a medical doctor

Dr Jean-Claude Konjugo, a 50-year-old optometrist and political activist, died in hospital on 1 August 1992 in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic, as a result of injuries which he sustained when he was beaten with rifle butts by members of the security forces. He and other government opponents were severely beaten by Gendarmes during a demonstration organized by trade unions and a coalition of opposition political parties earlier that day. The demonstration itself is reported to have been peaceful.

Eye-witnesses claim that Dr Konjugo was fatally assaulted when Gendarmes attacked a group of demonstrators, apparently in an attempt to disperse them.

Five of them, including Dr Konjugo, were arrested and taken by vehicle to a Gendarmerie post. At the Gendarmerie post Dr Konjugo complained that, as a result of the beatings, he could no longer stand, so the police then transferred him to a nearby hospital where he died shortly afterwards. The four other detainees were all released after the death of Dr Konjugo was made public the same day.

Dr Konjugo, who was a member of the executive committee of the Alliance pour le progrès, Alliance for Progress, a political party, is reported to have been targeted by government security forces because of statements critical of the government published in a journal known as "Le progrès", Progress, of which he was editor. He had previously been arrested and detained for six months during 1990 for attending a meeting to plan a political demonstration.

A government spokesman has reportedly announced that Dr Konjugo died as a result of inhaling tear gas. The family of Dr Konjugo and members of opposition political parties have rejected this explanation and are demanding that the government hold an independent inquiry to establish the cause of his death.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The demonstration, attended by some 1,000 people, was organized by a coalition of 14 political parties known as the "La concertation des forces démocratiques", Consultation of democratic forces, and trade unions to protest against the opening of a conference known as the "Débat national", National debate, which has been convened by President André Kolingba to discuss political reform in the Central African Republic. Opposition leaders have refused to take part in the debate and have insisted that it be replaced by a sovereign National Conference, whose decisions would be binding as the government. The government has rejected these demands.

The Central African Republic had been a one-party state from 1986 until April 1991, when strikes prompted a lifting of the ban on opposition parties in October 1991. After 10 years of power, President Kolingba agreed to convene a National Conference similar to those which have precipitated political change in other West and Central African states. The President has refused a conference which could lead to his loss of power, calling such a conference a "civilian coup d'Etat."

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes and airmail letters:

- Expressing concern at reports that Jean-Claude Konjugo died from injuries apparently inflicted on him by members of the security forces in Bangui on 1 August 1992;

- urging the authorities to set up an independent and impartial inquiry into the circumstances of Dr. Konjugo's death, and that, if members of the security forces acted unlawfully, they be brought to justice;

- expressing alarm at reports that other civilians involved in an apparently peaceful demonstration on 1 August suffered injury and request the authorities to issue clear public instructions to all members of the security forces that they may use force only when strictly necessary and to the extent required for the performance of their duty (in accordance with internationally recognized standards, notably the Code of Conduct for Law enforcement Officials adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 17 December 1979).

APPEALS TO:

1) President:

Son Excellence

le Général d'Armée André KOLINGBA

Président de la République et Chef du RPC

Palais de la Renaissance

Bangui

République centrafricaine

Telexes: 5300 PRESICAB RC or 5201 VICEPRE RC

Telegrams: President KOLINGBA Bangui, RCA

Salutation: Monsieur le Président

de la République/

Dear President

2) Prime Minister

Monsieur Edouard FRANK

Premier Ministre et Chef du Gouvernement

Palais de la Renaissance

Bangui

République centrafricaine

Telexes: 5300 PRESICAB RC or 5201 VICEPRE RC

Telegrams: Premier Ministre Frank, Bangui RCA

Salutation: Monsieur le Premier

Ministre/

Dear Prime Minister

3) Minister of Justice

Monsieur Jean KPWOKA

Ministre de la Justice et Garde des Sceaux

Ministère de la Justice

Bangui

République centrafricaine

Telexes: 5293 JUSTICE RC

Telegrams: Ministre Justice Kpwoka, Bangui, RCA

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

/Dear Minister

COPIES OF SOME APPEALS TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Monsieur Laurent GOMINA-PAMPALI

Ministre des Affaires étrangères

Ministère des Affaires étrangères

BP 936, Bangui, République centrafricaine

Minister of the Interior

Monsieur Ismaila NIMAGA

Ministre de la Sécurité publique et de l'Administration du territoire
Ministère de l'Administration du territoire
Bangui, République centrafricaine

Defence advisor to the President

Monsieur Christophe GRELOMBE
Conseiller en matière de la Défense au Président de la République
Présidence de la République
Palais de la Renaissance
Bangui, République centrafricaine

and to diplomatic representatives of the Central African Republic accredited
to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 September 1992.