

UA 148/01 "Disappearance" / Fear of torture or ill-treatment / Fear of

extrajudicial

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Jean-Pierre Gueret (m), electrical engineer
 Maxime Koko (m), fireman
 Scores of people belonging to the Yakomo ethnic
 group

At least 20 and possibly many more people have reportedly been summarily executed or subjected to human rights abuses following a failed coup attempt in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic (CAR). Many people, including Maxime Koko, have "disappeared" and are thought to be at risk of extrajudicial execution. Others, including Jean-Pierre Gueret, are held in detention centres, where they are at risk of torture or ill-treatment. Amnesty International is concerned for their safety.

On the morning of 12 June, soldiers arrested Jean-Pierre Gueret, an electrical engineer aged around 40, as he arrived for work at the state energy company, ENERCA. He is currently being held at the *Section d'enquête, de recherche et de documentation* (SERD), Investigation, Intelligence and Documentation Section, in Bangui. SERD is under the control of the Presidential Guard. Witnesses, who saw him there on 13 June, have reported that he had been severely beaten. He is thought to be at risk of further torture or ill-treatment in detention. Jean-Pierre Gueret is accused of having put an ENERCA vehicle at the disposal of soldiers who recently staged an unsuccessful coup against President Ange-Félix Patassé, and of providing them with petrol.

On 13 June, Maxime Koko, a 37-year-old sergeant in the CAR fire service, a branch of the armed forces, was detained and beaten by colleagues at the fire station (*base de sapeurs*) in the La Kouanga district of Bangui. According to witnesses, he was badly beaten before being led away to an unknown destination. His colleagues apparently accused him of being involved in the attempted coup.

Jean-Pierre Gueret and Maxime Koko belong to the Yakoma ethnic group, as does the leader of the coup attempt, former president General André Kolingba. Since the attempted coup, a number of Yakoma civilians, who are presumed - in many cases on ethnic grounds alone - to have supported the coup attempt, have reportedly been summarily executed or subjected to other human rights violations by government forces. Thousands of Yakoma have fled the city as violence escalated, fearing reprisals from government forces. Maxime Koko was among those who fled, but had returned believing that the situation had calmed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A climate of fear and vengeance has prevailed in Bangui since the coup attempt against CAR President Ange-Félix Patassé on 28 May, and human rights abuses have been committed by both government forces and those supporting the coup leader, General Kolingba.

The city became the scene of considerable violence as government forces loyal to President Patassé and supported by foreign forces gradually retook control of the city. Many of those involved, or suspected of involvement, in the coup were reportedly summarily executed or subjected to serious human rights violations.

A number of atrocities are reported to have taken place in southern districts of the city, where members of the Yakoma ethnic group are concentrated. On 12 June, several Yakoma were reportedly extrajudicially executed, including Gendarme Patrice Igawé, Gendarme Zoe-Virginie Yendimon, who was reportedly pregnant, and a gendarmerie captain, who was director of the Gendarmerie Training School in Kolongo, Bangui. Another fireman, N'Ddrouma, was also reportedly summarily executed. Killings are reported to be continuing. AI is actively researching these and other cases.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Jean-Pierre Gueret, who is at risk of torture at the SERD, and of Maxime Koko, who "disappeared" after being detained and severely beaten by fire service officers;
- urging the authorities guarantee the safety of both men, and to ensure that they are not subjected to further ill-treatment;
- calling on the authorities to reveal the whereabouts of Maxime Koko and to ensure that both men are granted immediate access to medical care, family members, lawyers and humanitarian and human rights organizations;
- asking to be informed why the two men have been detained, and calling for their immediate release if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- calling for an investigation into reports that the two men were beaten by members of the security forces, and for those responsible to be identified and brought to justice;
- calling on the authorities to take urgent measures to ensure that civilians, especially from the Yakoma ethnic group, as well as combatants captured following the attempted coup, are not subject to summary executions or other reprisals, and to bring to justice members of the security forces found to have committed human rights violations.

APPEALS TO: (please note that fax numbers in CAR can be difficult to reach)

Head of State government

Son Excellence M. Ange-Félix PATASSE
Président de la République et Chef du MLPC
Palais de la Renaissance
BANGUI

Central African Republic

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Telegrams: Président, Bangui, République centrafricaine

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President

Prime Minister and Head of Government

Monsieur Martin ZIGUELE
Premier Ministre et Chef du Gouvernement
Palais de la Renaissance
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Central African Republic

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Minister of National Defence

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Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Bangui, République centrafricaine

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Minister of Territorial Administration and Public Security

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Ministère de l'Intérieur

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Telegrams: Ministre Sécurité Publique, Bangui, République centrafricaine

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COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign and Francophone Affairs

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Ministre des Affaires étrangères et de la Francophonie

Ministère des Affaires étrangères

BP 936

BANGUI

Central African Republic

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 26 July 2001.