

EXTERNAL

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Fear of torture / Health concern

27 September 1996

CONGO Pierre Otto Mbongo, businessman

Pierre Otto Mbongo, arrested by the security forces on 11 September 1996, has not been seen since 18 September when he was moved to incommunicado detention at an undisclosed location. Amnesty International fears that he may be facing torture or ill-treatment, and is concerned for his health as he suffers from gout and hypertension, both of which require constant medical care.

Pierre Otto Mbongo, director of a company known as *Groupe Pierre Otto Mbongo* (GPOM), has been sued for bankruptcy by the *Banque internationale de développement du Congo* (BIDC), International Bank for the Development of Congo. He was due to appear in court on 21 October 1996.

At around 5.30 am on 11 September, his home in the capital, Brazzaville, was reportedly surrounded by about 50 armed soldiers in uniform who arrested him without a warrant. He was taken to Maya Maya International Airport's Border Police station (*Commissariat de Police de la frontière*) where he was detained for seven days.

On 18 September, following a committal order (*mandat de dépôt*) issued by the Dean of Brazzaville High Court Judges, the detainee was transferred to Brazzaville central prison. On arrival at the prison, he was immediately taken to a place which the authorities have not yet disclosed. Since then, his relatives, lawyer and doctor have not seen him.

Sources in Brazzaville say that his arrest and incommunicado detention may relate to his friendship with former President Denis Sassou N'Gesso, a political rival of President Pascal Lissouba. Two allies of Denis Sassou N'Gesso, Colonel Casimir Bouissa Matokot and Gabriel Longombe, were convicted on 5 September 1996 by a Brazzaville court on the charge of endangering the security of the state. Colonel Matokot was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, while Gabriel Longombe was stripped of his civil rights and prohibited from living in Brazzaville for two years.

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

- expressing concern at reports that Pierre Otto Mbongo has been held incommunicado by the security forces since 18 September 1996;
- seeking assurances that he is not being ill-treated and that he will not be subjected to torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment;
- demanding that the authorities immediately reveal his whereabouts to his relatives and explain the reasons for his arrest;
- requesting the authorities to allow him access to his lawyer and medical doctor and to transfer him to a civilian detention centre supervised by the judiciary without further delay;
- asking that he be allowed an opportunity to challenge the grounds for his arrest before an independent court of law.

APPEALS TO:

President
Son Excellence
Pascal Lissouba
Président de la République

Présidence de la République
BP 27, Brazzaville
République du Congo

Fax: +242 83 50 67

Telegrams: President Lissouba, Brazzaville, Congo

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Mr President

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Joseph Ouabari
Ministre de la Justice et Garde des sceaux
Minsitère de la Justice

BP 1219, BRAZZAVILLE

République du Congo

Fax: +242 83 51 21

Telegrams: Ministre de la Justice, Brazzaville, Congo

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Monsieur David-Charles Ganao
Premier Ministre et Chef du gouvernement,
Bureau du Premier Ministre
BP 2096, BRAZZAVILLE
République du Congo

Monsieur Phillipe Bikinkita
Ministre de l'Intérieur et de la sécurité
Ministère de l'Intérieur
BP 1219, BRAZZAVILLE
République du Congo

and to diplomatic representatives of Congo accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 November 1996.