

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 31/01/97

14 January 1997

**Further information on UA 301/96 (AFR 31/05/96, 24 December 1996) - Legal Concern
/ Fear of ill-treatment**

CÔTE D'IVOIRE Picas Damane)
 Charles Blé Goudé) student activists
 Souleymane Kamarate)
 Sylvanus Gore)

On 24 December 1996, the four leaders of the *Fédération estudiantine et scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire* (FESCI) named above were transferred to *la Maison d'arrêt d'Abidjan* (MACA), the main prison in Abidjan. They had been held incommunicado since 19 December 1996 when they were arrested in the office of the Minister of Security where they had been invited to discuss student grievances. Details of their treatment while they were held incommunicado in the basement of the Police Headquarters (*Préfecture de police*) in Abidjan are not yet known.

The four were charged with inciting violence in connection with violent clashes between the security forces and students during a demonstration about scholarship payments on 18 December 1996. On 7 January 1997 they were tried by a tribunal in Abidjan under a law commonly called the "anti-riot law" under which anyone who calls or leads a gathering can be held accountable for any violence which subsequently occurs.

Picas Damane, Charles Blé Goudé and Sylvanus Gore were sentenced to two years' imprisonment despite statements by several witnesses that the demonstration organized by FESCI had not been violent and that unidentified people were responsible for the violence which occurred several hours later. Souleymane Kamarate was acquitted. Amnesty International considers the three to be prisoners of conscience who were imprisoned because of their membership of FESCI which the government claims has been banned.

As they are no longer at risk of ill-treatment no further action is required from Urgent Action participants. Further action will be organized on their behalf outside the Urgent Action Network. Thank you to all those who appealed on their behalf.