

URGENT ACTION

TRADE UNIONIST ARRESTED, AT RISK OF TORTURE

Amnesty International is very concerned about the safety of Basile Mahan Gahé, a trade unionist who has been detained without charge at a police station in Abidjan's Williamsville neighbourhood, Côte d'Ivoire, since 26 April. Amnesty International believes he may be a prisoner of conscience, solely detained for his political views and because of his alleged links to former President Laurent Gbagbo's government.

Basile Mahan Gahé is the Secretary General of *Confédération Dignité*, a trade union affiliated with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). He was arrested without charge at his home in Abidjan on 26 April by members of the *Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire* (FRCI, Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire) who searched and ransacked his house. This arrest seems to be linked with suspicions that he might have possessed weapons. This has been used as a common accusation to justify arrests and raids against real or perceived pro-Gbagbo supporters.

For several weeks, the whereabouts of Basile Mahan Gahé were unknown. Amnesty International has received credible reports indicating that Basile Mahan Gahé has been subjected to torture, particularly during the first few days after his arrest and that he may be in poor health. Amnesty International has learned that he was taken to the cemetery in Yopougon one night, where he was tied up. Security forces then began firing all around him, making him believe they were going to kill him. On another occasion, he was pounded on his back with the flat side of the blade of a machete so many times and was in such extreme pain that he was unable to sit.

Despite repeated requests, an Amnesty International delegation that was in Côte d'Ivoire from 3 to 18 June was not allowed to visit him, adding to the concerns about his safety and physical condition.

The ITUC has sent at least two official letters to President Alassane Ouattara seeking information about the whereabouts of Basile Mahan Gahé and the reason for his arrest, but has not received any response to date.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in French or your own language:

- Express concern about the arrest and continued detention without charge of Basile Mahan Gahé;
- Call on the authorities to ensure that he is not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment and that he immediately receives adequate medical care;
- Urge that he be released immediately unless he is charged without delay with a recognizably criminal offence and granted such rights as unrestricted access to a lawyer and visits from his family;
- Ask the authorities to disclose the reasons for his arrest and his legal status.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 AUGUST 2011 TO:

Minister of Interior

Hamed Bakayoko

Ministry of Interior

Abidjan

Côte d'Ivoire

Fax: +225 20 32 32 27

Salutation: Dear Minister/

Monsieur le Ministre

And copies to:

Minister of Justice

Me Jeannot Kouadio Ahoussou

Ministry of Justice

Abidjan

Côte d'Ivoire

Fax: +225 20 21 85 10

**Salutation: Dear Minister/ Monsieur
le Ministre**

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since the arrest of former President Laurent Gbagbo on 11 April 2011, real or presumed supporters of Laurent Gbagbo, including lawyers and journalists, have been targeted both in Abidjan and in other parts of the country, notably in the west. Some of them have had their homes looted, their offices destroyed and have had to flee, sometimes abroad. Others were arbitrarily detained, sometimes tortured and ill-treated or subjected to extrajudicial executions.

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