

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal Concern/Torture

26 April 1991

UGANDA:

Michael Alip Atepu - member of national assembly
Omara Atubo - member of national assembly
Irene Apiu Laju - member of national assembly, (f)
Okodi Levi - member of national assembly
Zachary Olum - member of national assembly

The five members of parliament named above, who represent constituencies in Kitgum, Gulu and Lira Districts in northern Uganda, are among several hundred people arrested since 30 March 1991. Omara Atubo, Zachary Olum and Irene Apiu Laju were arrested in Kampala on 15 April 1991. They are reported to have been arrested followed a visit to northern Uganda where they complained to the military authorities about allegations of arbitrary arrests, beatings, rapes and extrajudicial executions during on-going military counter-insurgency operations in Gulu, Kitgum, Lira and Apac Districts. They are believed to have been taken back to Lira, in northern Uganda, where they remain in military custody without charge or trial.

Michael Alip Atepu and Okodi Levi, who are both from Lira, were arrested shortly after 30 March 1991 in Lira District. Okodi Levi is reported to be under house arrest but Michael Alip Atepu is thought to be in military custody.

Neither has been charged or tried. It is reported that complaints they made about army conduct in the course of arrests and interrogations to locate armed rebels, which began in late March, led to their arrest.

Amnesty International regards all five as possible prisoners of conscience, detained without charge or trial while reportedly attempting to fulfil their role as elected political representatives. It is unclear whether they were subject to complete immunity from arrest as members of parliament, but it does not seem that parliament was consulted about whether immunity should be waived.

Several hundred other people have been detained without charge or trial during the army operations in Lira and Apac Districts. Many are believed to have been taken, at least initially, to the army barracks in Lira but it is thought that some have since been transferred to other places of military detention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Uganda Government has been facing armed insurgency in the north and east of the country since late 1986. There have been mass arrests, which have frequently led to people being imprisoned without charge or trial for several years, and many incidents where the army has been responsible for the extrajudicial execution of prisoners and unarmed civilians. In addition to the arrests mentioned above, there have been reports of hundreds of detentions and incidents of extrajudicial execution and soldiers raping prisoners in Gulu and Kitgum Districts.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the detention without charge or trial of possible prisoners of conscience Omara Atubo, Zachary Olum, Irene Apiu Laju, Michael

Alip Atepu and Okodi Levi, who are reported to have been arrested while taking up the cases of people in their constituencies who were alleged to have been victims of human rights violations;

- expressing concern that they are held incommunicado in military custody and urging that they be referred promptly to a judicial authority and that they be allowed visits by relatives and legal representatives;

- urging that unless they are to be charged with recognisably criminal offenses and brought promptly to trial, Omara Atubo, Zachary Olum, Irene Apiu Laju, Michael Alip Atepu and Okodi Levi and all other detainees be immediately released.

APPEALS TO:

President Yoweri Museveni
 President of the Republic
 Office of the President
 Parliament Buildings
 PO Box 7168
 Kampala, Uganda

**Telegrams: President Museveni, State House
 Entebbe, Uganda**

Faxes: 256 41 235462

Telexes: 61048 KAPITAL; 61006 VICTORIA

Mr George Cosmas Adyebo
 Prime Minister
 Office of the Prime Minister
 PO Box 341
 Kampala, Uganda

Telegrams: Prime Minister Adyebo, Kampala, Uganda

Telexes: 62001

General David Tinyefunza
 Minister of State for Defence
 Ministry of Defence
 PO Box 3798
 Kampala, Uganda

Telegrams: Defence Minister Tinyefunza, Kampala, Uganda

Telexes: 61023

COPIES TO:

Prof George Kanyeihamba
 Minister of Justice and Attorney General
 Ministry of Justice
 PO Box 7183
 Kampala, Uganda

and to diplomatic representatives of Uganda in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 7 June 1991.