

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 62/20/97

UA 198/97

Ill-treatment / Fear for safety

4 July 1997

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (EX-ZAIRE)

Richard Mpiana Kalenga, law student
Luck Kayembe Ndonga, law student
Anthos Mulamba Nyunyi, medical student
Aaron Aidin Abala, economics student
Etienne Abdoul Karim Tshikala, medical student
Robby Tshimbalanga Ngilima, biology student
Germaine Mputu Mpinda (f), nursing science student

There is serious concern for the safety of the university students named above after one of them, Richard Mpiana Kalenga, was detained and severely ill-treated by government soldiers. He is currently undergoing treatment for injuries he sustained in custody.

Richard Mpiana Kalenga was arrested on 30 June 1997 by an army lieutenant at Martyrs Stadium (formerly known as Kamanyola Stadium) during the independence anniversary celebrations. He was taken to a detention centre at Mont Fleury in Kinshasa's Ma Campagne district where he was reportedly severely beaten with military belts (*cordelettes*) and truncheons (*matraques*) and trampled on. He was also reportedly subjected to submersion in an abandoned swimming pool full of dirty water.

While in custody, he was reportedly threatened with death and ordered to write a letter to President Laurent Kabila seeking forgiveness for causing disturbances and meeting opposition politicians at the university, and pledging loyalty to the ruling political alliance known as the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo* (AFDL).

Before his release on 2 July, a top military official ordered him to take to the AFDL headquarters six other students (named above) involved in organizing demonstrations. He was threatened with death if he failed to hand them over within five days. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the safety of all seven students, who are in hiding.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 17 May 1997, forces of the AFDL entered Kinshasa, the capital of Zaire and declared victory after a seven-month armed campaign against the Zairian army. The AFDL leader, Laurent Desire Kabila, has declared himself President, suspended the Zairian constitution, changed the name of the country to Democratic Republic of Congo, and installed a new government.

Since the beginning of the armed conflict, which began in eastern Zaire in October 1996, Amnesty International has been documenting human rights abuses committed by the AFDL and their allies. These abuses have included large-scale deliberate and arbitrary killings, "disappearances", torture and arbitrary arrests. In the short time since the AFDL have taken control of the whole country and established a transitional government, many more severe violations have continued to be reported, particularly against actual and perceived supporters of former President Mobutu Sese Seko and members of opposition political parties, which have been banned.

The arrest of Richard Mpiana Kalenga followed a student demonstration at Kinshasa University on 26 June 1997 in support of opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi who had been addressing the students. The night after the demonstration Etienne Tshisekedi and several other people were arrested by AFDL soldiers and briefly detained. Students have held several demonstrations since mid-May 1997. An AFDL soldier in Kinshasa extrajudicially executed a student during another demonstration on 12 June 1997.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest and severe ill-treatment of Richard Mpiana Kalenga whom Amnesty International considers to have been a prisoner of conscience during his detention;
- expressing concern at reports that the military authorities have threatened Richard Mpiana Kalenga with death and ordered him to bring his colleagues to the military who are likely to subject the students to torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment;
- urging the authorities to order an investigation into the ill-treatment of Richard Mpiana Kalenga and to ensure that those found responsible are brought to justice;
- requesting the authorities to take immediate measures to protect the students and prevent any arrests or further threats against them.

APPEALS TO:

Head of State

Son Excellence

Laurent-Désiré KABILA

Président de la République

Présidence de la République

Kinshasa-Ngaliema

Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: President Kabila, Kinshasa, DR Congo

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République

Minister of the Interior

M. Mwenze KONGOLO

Ministre de l'Intérieur

Hôtel du Conseil exécutif

Kinshasa-Gombe

Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Kinshasa, DR Congo

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

Minister of Justice

M. Celestin LWANGI

Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

BP 3137

Kinshasa-Gombe

Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Kinshasa, DR Congo

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

COPIES TO:

Commandant Anselme Masasu NINDAGA
Chef d'Etat-Major de l'AFDL
Ministère de la Défense
BP 4734
Kinshasa-Gombe
Democratic Republic of Congo

and to diplomatic representatives of Democratic Republic of Congo (ex-Zaire) accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 August 1997.