

PUBLIC

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19 October 1999

Further information on UA 143/99 (AFR 62/18/99, 23 June 1999) Medical concern / Legal concern / Fear of torture or ill-treatment

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Professor Alidor Muamba Ntita (corrected spelling)] Members of
Raymond Kabala] opposition
Odile Kalala (f), (released)] political
Placide Mpoyi, (released)] party

Etienne Richard Mbaya, former government minister (released)

Amnesty International has learnt that Odile Kalala, Placide Mpoyi and Etienne Richard Mbaya were released from detention without charge in July and August 1999.

The organization is growing increasingly concerned, however, for the safety of Professor Alidor Muamba Ntita and Raymond Kabala. Both men have been held incommunicado since they were arrested by soldiers on 12 May. They are now known to be in the custody of a branch of the armed forces known as *Détection Militaire des Activités Anti Patrie* (DEMIAP), Military Service for the Detection of Anti-Patriotic Activities. Others held at this detention centre say that conditions are extremely harsh and that torture is commonplace.

Professor Alidor Muamba Ntita is reported to be critically ill after months of ill-treatment in detention. The professor, a leading member of the DRC's largest opposition party, the *Union pour la démocratie et le progrès sociale* (UDPS), Union for Democracy and Social Progress, was arrested with Raymond Kabala and the two other party members named above while attending a meeting in the capital, Kinshasa. Etienne Richard Mbaya was arrested when he went to visit them at the military barracks where they were initially taken.

Amnesty International believes that Professor Ntita and Raymond Kabala are being detained solely on account of their political activities, and therefore considers them to be prisoners of conscience.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The arrest of the four UDPS members named above is part of a continuing pattern of intimidation and repression of opposition political activists and follows the arrests of several other party members in May 1999 (see UA 126/99, AFR 62/16/99, 2 June 1999).

President Laurent Kabila banned opposition political party activities and suspended the transitional constitution in May 1997, after his *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo* (AFDL), Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo, came to power.

In February 1999 a law was passed allowing political parties to apply for official recognition, but the conditions were so prohibitive that no political party is yet known to have applied or to have been officially recognized.

Since renewed armed conflict broke out in eastern DRC in August 1998, hundreds of people, both civilian and military, have been arrested for their perceived or actual opposition to the government of President Kabila. The atmosphere

has been particularly tense in Kinshasa, where the government and its officials are especially sensitive to any form of criticism.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/e-mails/express/airmail letters in french or in your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Professor Alidor Muamba Ntita and Raymond Kabala who have now been detained incommunicado by the armed forces, without charge, since 12 May 1999, and who are at risk of ill-treatment and torture;
- expressing concern at reports that Professor Alidor Muamba Ntita is critically ill as a result of ill-treatment in detention;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release if they are not to be promptly charged with a recognizable criminal offence;
- expressing concern that they are detained solely on account of their political activities as opposition party members and that, as such, you consider them to be prisoners of conscience;
- expressing concern that their arrest and detention are part of a continuing pattern of intimidation and repression of government critics, including members of political parties and journalists;
- pointing out that the DRC, as a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, is obliged to respect the right to freedom of expression and association.

APPEALS TO:

President

Président Laurent-Désiré KABILA
Président de la République, Présidence de la République
Kinshasa-Ngaliema, Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams:Président, Kinshasa, DR Congo

e-mails:UPP@ic.cd

Salutation:Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President Kabila

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Mwenze KONGOLO
Ministre de la justice
Ministère de la justice
BP 3137 Kinshasa-Gombe, Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams:Ministre Justice, DR Congo

Salutation:Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Minister for Human Rights

M. Léonard She OKITUNOU
Ministre des droits humains
Ministère des droits humains
Kinshasa-Gombe
République Démocratique du Congo

e-mails:mininfordc@ic.cd

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and to diplomatic representatives of Democratic Republic of Congo accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 November 1999.