

EXTERNAL

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*MEDICAL CONCERN*

Inyambo YETA  
ZAMBIA

Chief Inyambo Yeta is a leading opposition figure and Vice-President of Zambia's United National Independence Party (UNIP). He has been imprisoned since early June 1996 and fear has been expressed for his health by independent observers who recently visited him in Lusaka Central Prison where he is held. During the four months of his imprisonment, he has suffered a number of health problems including, on one occasion, a chest infection which required his hospitalization. Conditions in Lusaka prison are extremely poor and insanitary, medical care is minimal and there is a high incidence of deaths in the prison. With the onset of the hot and rainy season in Zambia and the lack of available medical care, it is felt that Inyambo Yeta - whose health is currently described as "fragile" - is at further risk of ill-health. Amnesty International is currently investigating his case and those of others arrested with him with a view to adopting them as prisoners of conscience.

### **Background**

Chief Inyambo Yeta and seven other UNIP members were arrested on 3 and 4 June 1996 on charges of treason and murder in connection with a series of bombings by a clandestine group calling itself "Black Mamba". Amnesty International believes that their arrests appear to have been politically motivated, prompted by their opposition to government. It has queried whether there is any concrete evidence to support the arrests and will be following their trial at which they are well-represented by a team of eight prominent human rights lawyers. The trial is expected to continue for many weeks more, possibly into November 1996. Two of those arrested with Chief Inyambo Yeta were earlier released after charges against them were dropped by the State Prosecutor.

At the end of June 1996, after a few weeks in detention, Inyambo Yeta was admitted to Hill Top Hospital in Lusaka complaining of fever and coughing fits and was diagnosed as having a severe chest infection. He has since been ill on several occasions with dysentery. Inyambo Yeta is confined to a cell in a penal block for prisoners serving sentences of life imprisonment or under sentence of death and the charges against him carry the death sentence. His cell is approximately two metres by one, yet houses two other prisoners in addition to him.

There are five other defendants in the trial who are also confined in overcrowded conditions. They are held in five of 16 larger cells measuring approximately 10 metres by 12. These cells were designed to accommodate a maximum of 20 individuals, but house an average

of 70 to 80 prisoners charged with aggravated robbery and murder. Lusaka Central Prison is also used to hold prohibited immigrants. All six defendants are receiving visits from family members and lawyers, and are permitted food from outside. (The food provided by the Zambian Prison Service is described by prisoners as spoiled and virtually inedible.)

### **Prison conditions in Lusaka Central Prison**

Conditions in Zambian prisons are notoriously poor. Lusaka Prison was opened in 1930 with a capacity for 260 inmates. At present, there is an estimated prison population of between 1,200 and 1,400. One recently-released detainee stated that prisoners have to sleep in a sitting position with their knees raised as there is insufficient space for them to stretch their legs.

In November 1995, a delegation from the Human Rights Committee of the Law Association of Zambia visited the prison and found the overcrowding shocking. In the report of their visit, they stated "The inmates sleep like sardines or the same way the slaves were being overcrowded in ships going to the USA during the slavery time". The delegation also noted that there was a lack of water in the prison which meant that inmates were unable to wash regularly, while basic necessities such as blankets, clothing and medical supplies were limited or non-existent.

Sanitation in the prison is extremely poor. There are open pit latrines outside the cells, in a communal holding area about half the size of a football pitch. Prisoners complain that the latrines become choked despite attempts to sluice them with water. The severe overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate medical facilities, meagre food supplies, and lack of potable water result in a high incidence of disease and illness. Dysentery and tuberculosis are particularly intransigent problems and prison officials told the Human Rights Committee that, between January 1995 and the time of their visit in November that year, 75 prisoners had died of tuberculosis and related illness. One of those arrested with Inyambo Yeta, and since released, estimated that over 40 people had died in the prison during the period of his confinement from early June to 10 September 1996. Prison conditions have not improved since the visit of the Human Rights Committee's delegation, and a similarly high death toll can be expected to continue until improvements are made.

Over the coming weeks, conditions for those in Lusaka Central Prison will further deteriorate as temperatures rise to up to 35°C (95°F) and there will be an accompanying increase in the number of flies and other vectors of disease. The overcrowding, shortage of water and inadequate sanitary facilities in the prison are of serious concern and likely to increase the rapid spread of infectious and other disease.

A government-appointed Human Rights Commission which investigated prison conditions between 1993 and 1995 also found that prisoners were without basic necessities such as soap and clothing, that food was unfit for consumption and that prisoners were denied medical treatment. Former detainees have told Amnesty International that prison officials do not take prisoners to hospital until they reach a critical stage of illness and that they are fearful of escape attempts. However, the prison infirmary - staffed by a nurse and by a doctor who visits once a week - has no facilities for dealing with serious illness and medicines are said to be limited to analgesics.

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Amnesty International is calling for an improvement in sanitary and medical facilities at Lusaka Central Prison and is, in particular, raising the case of Inyambo Yeta for whom particular concern has been expressed. It will follow the procedure and outcome of the trial against Inyambo Yeta and other members of the UNIP and, on the basis of what emerges, take further action as appropriate.

Extracts from the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners are given in the appendix. These were first adopted in 1955 in Geneva and later approved in 1957 and 1977 by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

## Appendix

### Extracts from the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners

Article 10: All accommodation provided for the use of prisoners and in particular all sleeping accommodation shall meet all requirements of health, due regard being paid to climatic conditions and particularly to cubic content of air, minimum floor space, lighting, heating and ventilation.

Article 12: The sanitary installations shall be adequate to enable every prisoner to comply with the needs of nature when necessary and in a clean and decent manner.

Article 13: Adequate bathing and shower installations shall be provided so that every prisoner may be enabled and required to have a bath or shower, at a temperature suitable to the climate, as frequently as necessary for general hygiene according to season and geographical region, but at least once a week in a temperate climate.

Article 15: Prisoners shall be required to keep their persons clean, and to this end they shall be provided with water and with such toilet articles as are necessary for health and cleanliness.

Article 17(1) states: Every prisoner who is not allowed to wear his own clothing shall be provided with an outfit of clothing suitable for the climate and adequate to keep him in good health.

Article 19: Every prisoner shall, in accordance with local or national standards, be provided with a separate bed, and with separate and sufficient bedding which shall be clean when issued, kept in good order and changed often enough to ensure its cleanliness.

Article 20 (1) states: Every prisoner shall be provided by the administration at the usual hours with food of nutritional value adequate for health and strength, of wholesome quality and well prepared and served. (2) Drinking water shall be available to every prisoner whenever he needs it.

Article 22 (2) states: Sick prisoners who require specialist treatment shall be transferred to specialized institutions or to civil hospitals. Where hospital facilities are provided in an institution, their equipment, furnishings and pharmaceutical supplies shall be proper for the medical care and treatment of sick prisoners, and there shall be a staff of suitable trained officers.

Article 25 (1) states: The medical officer shall have the care of the physical and mental health of the prisoners and should daily see all sick prisoners, all who complain of illness and any prisoners to whom his attention is specially directed. (2) The medical officer shall report to the director whenever he considers that a prisoner's physical or mental health has been or will be injuriously affected by continued imprisonment or by any condition of imprisonment.

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To: Medical professionals  
From: Medical Officer / Africa Regional Program  
Date: 1 October 1996

### *MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION*

Inyambo YETA  
ZAMBIA

#### **Keywords**

Theme: ill-health/medical care/prison conditions

#### **Summary**

Attached is information about Chief Inyambo Yeta, a prominent opposition politician for whose health considerable concern has been expressed. Amnesty International is currently reviewing his case with a view to adopting him as a prisoner of conscience. Information is also given on conditions in Lusaka Central Prison where he is held.

#### **Recommended Actions**

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses below:

- seeking information on the current state of health of Inyambo Yeta and seeking assurances that he will be provided with proper medical care, including access to a doctor of his own choice, prompt diagnosis and treatment during any period of further illness
- asking that Inyambo Yeta be transferred to an appropriate medical facility if his condition appears serious enough to warrant specialist medical treatment
- expressing concern that conditions in Lusaka Central Prison do not conform to international standards for the treatment of prisoners
- calling for an immediate improvement in prison conditions at Lusaka Central Prison, including a safe and dependable water supply to improve the dangerously unsanitary conditions

#### **Addresses:**

- 1) Hon. Chitalu Sampa  
Minister of Home Affairs  
Ministry of Home Affairs  
PO Box 32862  
Lusaka, Zambia

- 2) Commissioner of Prisons  
Prison Service Headquarters  
PO Box 30133  
Lusaka, Zambia
- 3) Mr Sakala  
Officer-In-Charge  
Lusaka Central Prison  
PO Box 30133  
Lusaka, Zambia
- 4) Medical Officer  
Lusaka Central Prison  
PO Box 30133  
Lusaka, Zambia

**Copies to:**

Mr Chileshe  
Chaplain  
Lusaka Central Prison  
PO Box 30133  
Lusaka, Zambia