

UA 174/02 Detention without charge/Fear of Torture 13 June 2002
or ill-treatment

CAMEROON Ousman Haman (m)
 Ahmadou Hassan (m)
 Adamu Isa (m)
 Yunusa Mbaghoji (m)

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Ousman Haman, Ahmadou Hassan, Adamu Isa and Yunusa Mbaghoji who are members of the Mbororo ethnic group in the North-West Province of Cameroon. They are detained without charge and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Ousman Haman was arrested in Bamenda, in the North-west Province on 29 April, but released on bail by the Bamenda High court on 17 May. According to his lawyer, he was tortured by the *gendarmes* following his arrest. He was reportedly beaten on the soles of his feet 150 times using a cane and flogged while being ordered to jump on sand by the *gendarmes*. He was also reportedly beaten by his inmates in Bamenda Terre brigade. He was taken to hospital, then released on bail but re-arrested a few days later.

Ahmadou Hassan, Adamu Isa and Yunusa Mbaghoji were arrested by the *Gendarmerie* on 15 May in Douala, Littoral Region. They were transferred to Bamenda and detained without charge for more than a week. Together with Ousman Haman, the men were transferred to the Bafoussam Central Prison, in the West Province, on 23 May. They are currently being held without charge, in violation of Cameroon law under which detainees should be referred to a judicial authority to be either charged or released within 72 hours of arrest.

Detainees in Cameroon are routinely tortured or ill-treated. The conditions of detention in police stations, *gendarmerie* headquarters and prisons are extremely harsh. Severe overcrowding, poor hygiene and ventilation, inadequate food and medical care results in a high mortality rate amongst detainees.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Mbororo ethnic group is particularly numerous in the North-West Province of Cameroon. Their main source of income is raising cattle. In 1986 a prominent businessman and a member of the Central Committee of the ruling party, Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), established two cattle ranches in the Boyo and Menchum divisions of the North-West province. He allegedly forced both Mbororo shepherds and farming communities from their lands without compensation, which made him the largest single private landowner in the province.

The land owner, who is said to have close links with the authorities and the *Gendarmerie* has been involved in land disputes with Mbororo shepherds. In 1992, the Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA) was established to protect Mbororo rights and promote their development. In 1993, three members of the organisation were arrested and unlawfully detained. Four members of MBOSCUDA were arrested in 1996 and held without charge for several days.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible in French, English or your own language:

- requesting the reasons for the arrest and detention without charge of Ousman Haman, Ahmadou Hassan, Adamu Isa and Yunusa Mbaghoji;
- urging that they be released unless they are to be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial in accordance with international standards, including Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which was ratified by Cameroon in 1984;

- urging that the safety of the four detainees be ensured and that the authorities give assurance that they will not be tortured or ill-treated during their detention;
- requesting that all allegations of torture made by Ousman Haman be promptly, impartially, independently and thoroughly investigated, in accordance with international treaties.
- calling for those found responsible to be suspended from active service pending the outcome of the investigations and judged, if required, according to international standards of fair trial.

APPEALS TO

Minister of Justice
S.E. Monsieur Amadou ALI
Ministre de la Justice
et Garde des Sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
1000 Yaoundé
République du Cameroun

Telegram: Ministre de la Justice, Yaounde, Republique du Cameroun

Fax: + 237 2230005/2222154 (if someone answers say "Je voudrais envoyer un fax, s'il vous plaît")

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/ Dear Minister

Minister of Defence
M. Laurent ESSO
Ministre délégué auprès de la Présidence de la République
chargé de la défense
Ministère de la défense
1000 Yaoundé
République du Cameroun

Telegram: Ministre de la Defense, Yaounde, Republique du Cameroun

Fax: + 237 223 5971

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

Secretary of State responsible for the Gendarmerie
M. Remy Zemeka
Secrétaire d'Etat chargé de la Gendarmerie
Ministère de la défense
1000 Yaoundé
République du Cameroun

Telegram: Secrétaire d'Etat chargé de la Gendarmerie Yaounde, Republique du Cameroun

Fax: + 237 222 3998

Salutation: Monsieur le secrétaire d'Etat/ Dear Secretary of State

(note that fax numbers can be very difficult to obtain, but please keep trying)

COPIES TO:

Newspapers
Le Messenger,
BP 5925, 226 Boulevard de la Liberté
Douala, Cameroon

Fax: + 237 342 02 14 (if someone answers say: "Je voudrais envoyer un fax, s'il vous plaît")

Cameroon Tribune
BP 1218, Yaoundé
Cameroon

Fax: + 237 230 43 62

and to diplomatic representatives of Cameroon accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 25 July 2002.

