

**Public**

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To: Health professionals  
From: Medical team / Africa program  
Date: 10 September 2002

**MEDICAL ACTION**  
**Ill-health of Hassan Bility**  
**Journalist and human rights defender, Liberia**

**Key words** ill-health / incommunicado detention

**Amnesty International's concerns**

Amnesty International is concerned for the health of Hassan Bility, a Liberian journalist and human rights defender, who has been detained at an unknown location in the capital, Monrovia, since 24 June 2002. Before his arrest he was already suffering from malaria and needs access to medical treatment urgently.

In a letter sent to a contact on 20 July, Hassan Bility indicated that his health was deteriorating and that he did not have access to medical care. The government has granted permission to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit him, but under conditions which are unacceptable to the ICRC (Amnesty International was unable to obtain more information on this due to the confidentiality of ICRC's work).

**Background information**

Hassan Bility was harassed and arrested in Monrovia on 24 June 2002 by men in plain clothes. Hassan Bility belongs to the Mandingo ethnic group, whose members are frequently subjected to human rights violations by the government. During the Liberian civil war (1989 – 1996), the warring faction confronting the then government was comprised mainly of people of Mandingo ethnic origin. Since then, the government has indiscriminately associated members of the Mandingo group with armed opposition groups. The Liberian government has accused Hassan Bility of being an "illegal combatant" and being involved in a plot to assassinate the president.

Hassan Bility has been detained twice in the past. The *Analyst* newspaper, of which he is the editor, has been closed down by the government twice as a result of writing and publishing articles deemed critical of the government.

The Liberian government's treatment of Hassan Bility has already been publicly condemned by civil society in Liberia and other West African countries, by the European Union, the US government and numerous international non-governmental organizations.

**Recommended actions & addresses**

Please write letters in English to the authorities below, using professionally-headed paper if you use this in your profession:

- Introducing yourself in your professional capacity;
- Expressing concern about the detention without charge of Hassan Bility at an unknown location;
- Urging the authorities to reveal his whereabouts and to release him unless charged with a recognisable criminal offence;

- Expressing concern at reports of his ill-health; seek information about his diagnosis and current treatment;
- Urging that he is given immediate access to family, lawyers and appropriate medical care, in accordance with internationally agreed standards such as the *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*.

## **Addresses**

### **President of the Republic of Liberia**

His Excellency Mr Charles Taylor  
 Office of the President  
 Executive Mansion  
 PO Box 9001, Capitol Hill  
 Monrovia, Republic of Liberia  
 Fax: + 231 226 544 / 228 026 (if someone answers, ask for a fax tone)  
 Salutation: Dear President Taylor

### **Director of Police**

Paul Mulbah  
 National Police Force  
 National Police Headquarters  
 Monrovia, Republic of Liberia  
 Fax: + 231 226 785  
 Salutation: Dear Mr Mulbah

### **Minister of Justice**

Counsellor L. Koboi Johnson  
 Minister of Justice  
 Ministry of Justice  
 Ashmun St, PO Box 9006  
 Monrovia, Republic of Liberia  
 Fax: + 231 227 872  
 Salutation: Dear Mr Varmah

### **Copies to:**

#### **EU representative in Liberia**

Fax: + 231 226 274

#### **American Embassy in Liberia**

Ambassador John Blaney  
 111 United Nations Drive  
 Monrovia, Liberia  
 Fax: + 231 226 148/49

and to diplomatic representatives of Liberia accredited to your country.

If you receive no reply from the government or other recipients within two months of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow up letter seeking a response, referring to your previous letter(s). Please check with the medical team if you are sending appeals after 30 October 2002, and send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat (att: medical team).

### **Monitoring of action**

If you have access to e-mail you can help our attempt to monitor letter-writing actions. Please write in the subject line of your e-mail the index number of the action and the number of letters you write e.g. AFR 34/015/2002 – 2

Please send your message to [medical@amnesty.org](mailto:medical@amnesty.org) Thank you.