

UA 111/01

Fear for

CAMEROUN Professor Sindjoun Pokam
Djeukam Tchameni
Djimo Léandre
Peter William Mandio, journalist
Olivier Sande

Five men have been arrested without charge or trial, and are being held in harsh conditions. Torture and ill-treatment is widespread in Cameroon, and Amnesty International fears for their safety.

The five men named above were arrested on 26 April. No reason has been given for their arrest. They are being held at the *Commissariat central de police*, central police station, in the capital, Douala, where they share a cell of 16 square metres. They have no access to sanitary facilities, and have to sleep on the floor. One of the detainees, Professor Sindjoun Pokam, injured his head when transferred to the police station. He has not yet received medical treatment. On 1 May the five detainees began a hunger strike in protest at their detention.

Professor Sindjoun Pokam, Djeukam Tchameni, Djimo Léandre and Peter William Mandio are members of the *Collectif National contre L'Impunité* (CNI), National Coalition against Impunity, which campaigns to bring the perpetrators of human rights violations to justice. They were arrested as they were making their way to a meeting at another CNI member's house. They are thought to have been arrested solely for exercising their right of freedom of expression, and for protesting against impunity.

In 1990, Djeukam Tchameni was detained without charge for 16 months, before he was brought before a military tribunal. At the time, Amnesty International raised legal concerns on his case. Journalist Peter William Mandio is the director of publication for the critical *Le Front Indépendant* newspaper.

The fifth person, Olivier Sande, was arrested the same day and transferred with the others to the same police station. It is not known why he has been detained.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture, who visited Cameroon in 1999, torture is "widespread and systematic". Amnesty International has repeatedly raised concerns about torture and ill-treatment in custody, and extrajudicial executions in Cameroon.

The CNI was formed after the government attempted to silence protests at the "disappearance" of nine youths from the Douala neighbourhood of Bépanda Omnisport in February. The youths are widely believed to have been killed by the *Commandement Opérationnel de la Gendarmerie*, a special security force set up to combat the high levels street crime in Douala. The *Commandement Opérationnel* has been accused of large numbers of extrajudicial executions, of acts of torture, indiscriminate round-ups of civilians and their public humiliation in search for criminal suspects.

Recently, the government has responded to national and international pressure by creating of a commission of inquiry to look into the "disappearances", and

by transferring the commanding officer of the *Commandement Opérationnel* to another part of the country. However, the commission is not independent, and the government has not made any commitment to publishing its findings. Public protests on the issue have been banned, and family members and activists speaking out against alleged human rights violations are harassed, followed and threatened. The government has not responded positively to calls to admit or invite international observers to monitor this and other cases.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Sindjoun Pokam, Djeukam Tchameni, Djimo Léandre, Peter William Mandio and Olivier Sande;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release, unless they to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence;
- emphasising that those speaking out on alleged human rights violations should not be harassed or threatened while exercising their right to freedom of expression and non-violent protest.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice
Monsieur Amadou Ali
Ministre de la Justice
Garde des Sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
1000 Yaoundé
Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

Attorney General of the Republic
Monsieur Michel Angouing
Procureur de la République
Ministère de la Justice
1000 Yaoundé
Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Procureur de la République

Minister of the Interior
Monsieur Ferdinand Koungou Edima
Ministre de l'Administration du Territoire
Ministère de l'Administration du Territoire
1000 Yaoundé
République du Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

Director of Police in Douala
Monsieur Djibril Garba
Commissaire Principal et Directeur de la police à Douala
Direction Centrale de la Police
Douala
Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Commissaire

COPIES TO:

Prime Minister

Mr. Peter Mafany Musonge
Primature
1000 Yaoundé
Cameroon

Director of Police in Yaoundé
Directeur de la Police à Yaoundé
Monsieur Pierre Minlo Medjo
Commissaire divisionnaire et Directeur de la Police à Yaoundé
Fax: + 237 427889

Newspapers
Le Front Indépendant
Fax: + 237 425432

Le Messenger
BP 5925 Douala
Cameroon
Fax: + 237 42 02 14
Emails: redmes@wagne.net.cm or lemessenger@camnet.cm

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 13 June 2001.