

UA 293/00

Fear for safety / Torture / Prisoners of Conscience

22 September 2000

TANZANIA

Abdullah Said Abeid, Civic United Front (CUF) member and Marine Guard Commander
Hamad Masoud Hamad, CUF House of Representatives member and director of CUF's human rights committee
Hamza Makame Omar, Former head of Pemba island Anti-smuggling Unit
Shariff Haji Dadi, Personal Assistant to the Secretary General of CUF and former deputy director in the Ministry of Labour
Mohamed Ali Maalim, CUF security officer
Soud Yusuf Mgeni, CUF House of Representatives member and former Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Education
Several other CUF members and supporters

Police have reportedly tortured a number of prisoners, including some that Amnesty International has adopted as prisoners of conscience, injuring at least six people. Amnesty International is concerned for their safety.

On 12 September members and supporters of the Civic United Front (CUF), being held in Central Prison on the island of Zanzibar, reportedly went on hunger strike after they were refused bread at breakfast. Prison officers reportedly reacted by beating them with *rungus* (heavy sticks), seriously injuring at least six prisoners. The beatings were reportedly carried out by ten junior prison officers in the presence of six senior prison officers. The authorities have denied that the incident happened.

Amnesty International is concerned that the torture forms part of a wider pattern of abuse and intimidation against opposition members on the island of Zanzibar in the run up to Presidential and Parliamentary elections to be held on 29 October.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A number of CUF members and supporters, including 18 people adopted as prisoners of conscience by Amnesty International, have been detained in Central Prison for up to three years, awaiting trial on treason charges. The trial has been delayed several times, apparently in an effort to ensure that the detainees are unable to participate in the forthcoming elections. On 16 August the defence lawyer representing the prisoners submitted a petition to the Court of Appeal, asking for the case to be dismissed on the grounds that Zanzibar does not have the legal right to bring treason charges as it is not a sovereign state in its own right, but part of the United Republic of Tanzania. The Court of Appeal ruling is expected before the October elections.

The Zanzibar authorities have consistently attempted to stifle political opposition on the island over the last few years, for example by imprisoning members of the opposition. Due to the forthcoming elections, the current situation is tense and a number of human rights abuses have been reported, including beatings. At least 45 CUF members were detained recently after clashing with supporters of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi party.

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

- expressing concern that prisoners at Central Prison have been tortured and urging that they are protected from further abuse;
- urging the authorities to carry out a full investigation into the alleged torture with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to ensure that those injured as a result of the torture receive full medical treatment;

- urging the government to immediately release any prisoners not charged with a recognisably criminal offence, including the 18 prisoners of conscience.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency, Dr Salmin Amour
President of Zanzibar
Office of the President
PO Box 776, Zanzibar
Tanzania

Fax: + 255 24 31822

Salutation: Dear President

Mr Rhamadhan Khatibu Shaaban
Commissioner of Prisons
Zanzibar Prison Service

PO Box 397, Zanzibar

Tanzania

Salutation: Dear Commissioner

Mr Saleh Abdallah Damoha
Attorney General's Chambers
PO box 239
Zanzibar
Tanzania

Fax: c/o + 255 24 31822

Salutation: Dear Attorney General

His excellency, President Benjamin Mkapa
Office of the President
PO Box 9120
Dar es Salaam
Tanzania

Fax: + 255 22 2113425

Salutation: Your Excellency

Please note that it can be very difficult to get through to Tanzanian fax numbers. It might help to call the international operator in your country and ask him or her to connect you.

COPIES TO:

Mr Pascal Shija, Editor
The Guardian
PO Box 31042
Dar es Salaam

and to diplomatic representatives of Tanzania accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 November 2000.