

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 17/05/99

26 February 1999

Further information on UA 113/98 (AFR 17/07/98, 15 April 1998) and follow-ups (AFR 17/11/98, 14 August 1998; AFR 17/12/98, 10 September 1998, AFR 17/14/98, 29 October 1998 and AFR 17/19/98, 18 December 1998) - Torture and ill-treatment/Health concern

CAMEROON51 prisoners, including:

Ebenezer Akwanga, aged 26, student and President of the
Southern Cameroons Youth League
Fon Peter Fonyam, aged 50
Bika Iderisu, aged 22
Ndifet Zacharia Khan, aged 56
Grace Yaya Kwei (f), aged 38
Wilson Che Neba, aged 19
Fidelis Nyankwe, aged 40
Ndum Anoh Robertson, aged 68
Ndifon Joseph Tangu, aged 58
Philip Tete, aged 59
Patrick Yimbu, aged 36

and new name: Salifu Tanko, aged 39

Fifty one prisoners are still being held without charge or trial in connection with attacks by armed groups on towns in North-West Province in March 1997.

They are held in extremely harsh conditions and several are reported to be seriously ill either because of torture and ill-treatment at the time of their arrest or because of lack of medical care while in detention. At least nine have died in detention.

There are fears for the health and safety of all 51, who are held in the Central Prison, Nkondengui, in Yaoundé, and the Principal Prison, in Mfou. Three have recently been transferred to hospital: Ndifet Zacharia Khan, Salifu Tanko and Patrick Yimbu. Ndifet Zacharia Khan had toes on both feet amputated in 1997 as a result of severe beatings at the time of his arrest. Others reported to be seriously ill are Ebenezer Akwanga, Grace Yaya Kwei, Fidelis Nyankwe, Ndum Anoh Robertson and Ndifon Joseph Tangu.

There is severe overcrowding and hygiene and sanitary facilities are inadequate. Diet and medical care are also seriously deficient.

The 51 prisoners are held in connection with the attacks by armed groups on towns in North-West Province in late March 1997, during which 10 people, including three paramilitary police officers (*gendarmes*), were killed. No group claimed responsibility, but the authorities blamed the attacks on a group supporting independence for Cameroon's two English-speaking provinces, North-West and South-West Provinces.

Fourteen of those arrested and imprisoned were unconditionally released during 1998: two in February, two in August, two in October and another eight in November 1998.

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

- acknowledging the government's responsibility to bring to justice those responsible for criminal acts, but expressing concern that the remaining 51 prisoners held in connection with the events in North-West Province of March 1997 have now been imprisoned for up to almost two years without charge or trial;
- urging that they be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial in accordance with international standards, or else released;
- expressing serious concern about the health and safety of the remaining prisoners held at the Central Prison, Nkondengui, in Yaoundé, and the Principal Prison in Mfou;
- urging that they be treated humanely in accordance with international standards for the treatment of prisoners and, in particular, that they be protected from torture and ill-treatment and receive all necessary medical care as a matter of urgency, including admittance to hospital if necessary;
- reminding the government of its obligation under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified in 1984, to guarantee fundamental rights which are also enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including Article 5: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment", and Article 10: "Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him."

APPEALS TO:President

Son Excellence M. Paul Biya, Président de la République
Palais de l'Unité, 1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telegrams: President, Yaounde, Cameroon

Faxes: + 237 20 33 06

Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President Biya

Minister of Justice

M. Laurent Easo, Ministre de la Justice, Garde des Sceaux, Ministère de la Justice, 1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Yaounde, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of the Interior,

M. Samson Ename Ename, Ministre de l'Administration territoriale, Ministère de l'Administration territoriale
1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telegrams: Minister Interior, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Dr Solomon Nfor Gwei, President, National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, PO Box 20317, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Cameroon Post, BP 1981, Yaoundé, Cameroon

The Herald, BP 3659 Messa, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Le Messager, BP 5925, 226 Boulevard de la Liberté, Douala, Cameroon

La Nouvelle Expression, BP 15333, 12 rue Prince de Galles, Douala, Cameroon

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 9 April 1999.