

TOGO Ameen Ayodele, Amnesty International member in Nigeria

Amnesty International is concerned that all its members travelling to and within Togo may be at risk of arrest and torture by the Togolese security forces, after Ameen Ayodele, an active member of the organisation from Nigeria, was detained and tortured by the Togolese security forces from 19 - 27 May 1999 because of his membership of the organisation.

On 19 May 1999, Ameen Ayodele was travelling from Ghana to Nigeria by road via Togo. At the border post of Aflao between Ghana and Togo, he presented his Amnesty International membership card to the Togolese security forces as a means of identification, as all his other documents, including his passport, had been stolen. The security forces arrested him on suspicion of being 'a spy' for Amnesty International, in advance of Secretary-General Pierre Sané's scheduled visit to Lomé on 21 May which was subsequently cancelled by the authorities.

Ameen was to spend the next nine days confined to a cell, naked and deprived of food. He was beaten and tortured every day, as the Togolese security forces interrogated him about his involvement with Amnesty International in Togo. He had no information to give them. As he speaks no French, only English, all the interrogations were conducted through an interpreter. He was threatened with death at least twice, and on one occasion a gun was actually put into his mouth.

Ameen Ayodele was released on 27 May following intervention by a chief of police who was sympathetic to his case and spoke good English. He then returned to Nigeria, where he does not consider himself to be at further risk. Amnesty International is advising its members to be cautious when travelling to and in Togo, as their security cannot be guaranteed by the authorities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The arrest and torture of Ameen Ayodele is part of a pattern of human rights violations against human rights defenders in Togo. This pattern was highlighted by Amnesty International's report, published in early May, which accuses the Togolese government of allowing the security forces to carry out grave human rights violations with impunity before, during and after the 1998 elections.

Three other human rights defenders have been arrested since the beginning of May in connection with Amnesty International's report. Human rights defenders Tengue Nestor and Gayibor François were arrested by police, together with Sant'Anna Brice, in Lomé, on 3 May (see EXTRA 58/99, 7 May, AFR 57/04/99). Nadjombe Antoine Koffi, a Togolese Amnesty International member, was arrested on 14 May in Lomé (See UA 112/99, 18 May, AFR 57/06/99). Amnesty International considers all of them to be prisoners of conscience.

Human rights defenders Bolouvi Arsène and Adjoh Benjamin have been in hiding since 26 May 1999, when the security forces attempted to arrest them. Amnesty International believes that if they were arrested, they would be prisoners of conscience, and they could be at risk of torture and ill-treatment (see UA 124/99, 27 May 1999, AFR 57/10/99).

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

- expressing concern that Ameen Ayodele, a Nigerian national, was detained and tortured from 19 to 27 May 1999 by the Togolese security forces at Aflao border post, simply because of his membership of Amnesty International;
- expressing concern that since the beginning of May several people, including three human rights defenders, have been arrested and are prisoners of conscience;
- calling on the Togolese authorities to release Tengue Nestor, Gayibor François, Sant'Anna Brice and Nadjombe Antoine Koffi immediately and unconditionally;
- urging the Togolese authorities to give immediate and unconditional guarantees for the safety of members of Amnesty International and other human rights defenders in Togo.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Son Excellence

Monsieur le Général Gnassingbé Eyadéma

Président de la République, Palais Présidentiel, Avenue de la Marina, Lomé, Togo

Telegrams:Président, Lomé, Togo

Faxes: + 228 21 68 12 (attention of Président de la République)

Salutation:Son Excellence / Your Excellency

Minister of the Interior

Général de Brigade Séyi Memene

Ministre de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité, Ministère de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité, Rue Albert Sarraut, Lomé, Togo

Telegrams:Ministre l'Intérieur, Lomé, Togo

Salutation:Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of Justice

M. Bitokotipou Yagninim

Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice, Ministère de la Justice, Avenue de la Marina, Rue Colonel de Roux, Lomé, Togo

Telegrams:Ministre Justice, Lomé, Togo

Salutation:Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Crocodile (Newspaper), BP 60087 Lomé, Togo

Togo presse, BP 891 Lomé, Togo

Tell, PMB 21749, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria

Fax + 234 1 492 3499, e-mail editor@tell.org

The News, PMB 21531, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria

Fax + 234 1 492 4998/3710, e-mail AOnanuga@aol.com

Guardian, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos, Nigeria

E-mail: letters@ngrguardiannews.com

The Ghanaian Chronicle, Private Mail Bag, Accra-North

Fax: + 233 21 232608 / 774722

E-mail: chronicl@africaonline.com.gh

and to diplomatic representatives of Togo accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 July 1999.