

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety

24 November 1998

REPUBLIC OF CONGO Christian Mounzeo and other human rights activists

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Christian Mounzeo, Secretary General of the *Observatoire Congolais des droits de l'homme* (OCDH), Congolese Observatory of Human Rights, and other human rights activists in the Republic of Congo, following recent threats and intimidation by government and security officials.

Christian Mounzeo was arbitrarily arrested in Pointe-Noire airport on 15 November 1998 and taken to the *Commissariat du Port*, Port Police Station. The police severely beat and tortured him before releasing him, without charge, the following day. The authorities have not clarified the reason for his arrest.

Other members of the OCDH have received threats of arrest and intimidation by government and security officials since the OCDH published a report on 4 November 1998 denouncing human rights abuses by government forces and armed opposition groups.

Amnesty International is concerned that members of the OCDH and other human rights activists may be targeted solely for revealing or denouncing human rights violations by government and security officials. The OCDH and other human rights organizations have consistently denounced human rights abuses committed by both government forces and armed opposition groups. Many government and security officials have accused the OCDH and other organizations of being opponents of the government.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since President Sassou Nguesso returned to power in a coup d'etat in October 1997, ousting former President Lissouba, human rights violations have continued on a large scale. President Nguesso had previously been in power from 1979 to 1992.

Hundreds of unarmed civilians and captured combatants loyal to former President Lissouba have been extrajudicially executed by government forces and members of armed groups loyal to President Nguesso. Several dozen suspected government opponents, many of whom appear to be prisoners of conscience, have been detained without charge or trial. Cases of torture, ill-treatment and "disappearance" by government forces have also been reported. Armed groups have committed deliberate and arbitrary killings and other human rights abuses.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send faxes/express/airmail letters in French or your own language (please note that fax tones can be difficult to obtain):

- expressing concern at the arbitrary arrest, ill-treatment and torture of Christian Mounzeo by government forces in Pointe-Noire on 15 and 16 November;
- calling for a thorough, independent and impartial investigation into the human rights violations committed against Christian Mounzeo, for the results of the investigation to be made public and for those found responsible to be brought to justice in accordance with international standards of fairness;
- expressing concern that members of the OCDH and other human rights organizations may be at risk of human rights violations solely because of their human rights work;
- urging the authorities to take immediate steps to prevent any further human rights violations against members of the OCDH and other human rights

organizations and to ensure that they are able to carry out their work without fear for their safety;

- reminding the government of the Republic of Congo of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 19: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression".

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Son Excellence M. Denis Sassou NGUESSO

Président de la République

BP 2006, Brazzaville

République du Congo

Fax: 242 81 32 55

Salutation: *Monsieur le Président de la République* / Dear President

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Pierre NZE

Ministre d'Etat, Ministre de la Justice, Garde des Sceaux

Ministère de la Justice

Brazzaville

République du Congo

Fax: 242 61 41 67

Salutation: *Monsieur le Ministre* / Dear Minister

Regional Director of the National Police in Pointe-Noire

Colonel Théophile Llobakima

Directeur Régional de la Police Nationale

Pointe-Noire

République du Congo

Fax: 242 94 09 80

Salutation: *Monsieur le Directeur* / Dear Director

Public Prosecutor of Pointe-Noire Appeal Court

Madame Jocelyne Milandou

Procureur Général près de la Cour d'Appel de Pointe-Noire

BP 689, Pointe-Noire

République du Congo

Salutation: *Madame le Procureur Général* / Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

La Semaine Africaine, BP 2080, Brazzaville, Republic of Congo

and to diplomatic representatives of the Republic of Congo accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 5 January 1999.

" Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression "

Article 19, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Visit the Amnesty International UDHR campaign website on <http://www.amnesty.excite.com>