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To: Medical professionals
From: Medical office / Africa Program
Date: 9 April 1998

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

**Prisoners arrested in coup attempt
ZAMBIA**

Keywords

Theme: Ill-health/ medical care

Summary

Some of the officers and others arrested in connection with a coup attempt in Zambia on 28 October 1997 are reported to be in ill health and not to be receiving adequate medical attention. In at least one case, the reported illness and lack of medical care could have serious consequences. AI is seeking assurances that the prisoners will receive any necessary medical care.

Recommended Actions

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses below:

oexplaining that you are writing concerning the cases of a number of prisoners held in connection with the October 1997 coup attempt

omaking clear that the purpose of your letter has nothing to do with the nature of the coup attempt or with the government's right to prosecute those suspected of carrying it out but that you are writing on a matter of humanitarian concern

onoting that Major Musonda Kangwa is reported to be suffering from bleeding from the back passage and has a very low blood pressure

oasking what diagnosis has been made in his case and what treatment has been recommended; urging that he receive all treatment recommended in a proper medical facility and that he be permitted to consult an independent doctor of his choice if he wishes

oreferring to other prisoners said to be suffering from symptoms such as chest pain and coughing as well as diarrhoea one of whom has been confirmed as suffering from TB and is receiving treatment; asking what diagnosis has been made for the other prisoners complaining of respiratory and gastrointestinal problems and what treatment is being given

ourging that the prisoners' security and well being be guaranteed in line with international human rights standards and that they be permitted to consult doctors of their choice and to receive any treatment recommended

Letters to Dr Lumbwe could politely ask for details of Musonda Kangwa's health when he was discharged to prison

Addresses

Commanding Officer
Lusaka Remand Prison - Kamwala
Box 30701, Lusaka
Zambia

Regional Commanding Officer
Lusaka Province Prisons
Box 30133, Lusaka
Zambia

Dr Colonel Lumbwe
Commandant
Maina Soko Military Hospital
Box 320091, Lusaka
Zambia
Fax: + 260-1-263883

Head of Zambia Prison Service
Mr Sinyangwe
Commissioner of Prisons
Prison Service Headquarters
PO Box 30133
Lusaka
Zambia

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MEDICAL CONCERN

Prisoners arrested in coup plot ZAMBIA

On 28 October 1997, a feeble attempt was made to overthrow the government of Zambia. The coup attempt was quickly put down and a state of emergency introduced during which repressive measures were widely imposed on perceived opponents.

At least six men arrested in connection with the coup were allegedly tortured and some of them are reported to be now in a state of ill health. The details of their health are not clear but the picture is one which gives grounds for concern. Major Musonda Kangwa is reported to be suffering from chronic bleeding following surgery (reportedly for piles) and suffers hypotension (B.P 80/60). He was removed from his hospital bed at Maina Soko Military Hospital on 3 April 1998 and returned to a prison cell where he is without adequate medical supervision and treatment, reportedly on the recommendation of one of the military doctors. He is believed to have asked for the right to an examination by an independent doctor but this has been refused. Three prisoners -- Gift Chisha, Isaac Munthali and Cletus Chilekwa -- all complain of chest pain and coughing. Dean Mung'omba, leader of the opposition Zambia Democratic Congress, has had TB infection confirmed and is now receiving treatment.

Marshal Simwinga, Kennedy Muzata, Mulose Munze and Henry Milambo are reported to have a variety of health problems. These include diarrhoea (Munze and Milambo), mumps (Muzata; AI has no details of how this diagnosis was made), and headaches, toothache and swelling of the right side of the face (Simwinga).

One female detainee, Princess Nakatindi Wina, was in hospital receiving medical treatment for severe abdominal pain when she was taken to Lusaka for the trial. She is currently held in Kamwala Remand Prison where the other prisoners are held. The conditions in the prison are believed to be unsanitary and access to medical care limited.

Amnesty International is calling for all the detainees to receive proper medical examinations, by independent doctors if they request, to diagnose their medical problems and for them to receive whatever medical care is needed.

Background

Under the state of emergency declared shortly after the coup attempt, the police arrested a number of those alleged to be participants. They held Dean Mung'omba (arrested 31 October 1998) in incommunicado detention at police headquarters in central Lusaka for four days, despite both his repeated requests for legal representation and his lawyers' attempts to discover his whereabouts. During that time, Dean Mung'omba was tortured and denied food, drink and sleep. He denied involvement in the plot, but police interrogators tried to torture him into naming other opposition activists as co-conspirators. His lawyers did not see their client until he appeared in court on 4 November 1997 to challenge his detention, bearing the marks of bruises and cigarette burns. A medical doctor later confirmed bruising and burn wounds, which appear to be consistent with the torture he described.

Mung'omba also told his lawyers of seeing Captain Steven Lungu, the alleged coup attempt leader, lying on the floor of the police cell unconscious after a session of torture. Initially, the other detainees thought he was dead, and when he finally regained consciousness, Steven Lungu was reportedly unable to walk.

Major Musonda Kangwa was reportedly tortured during police interrogation after his detention on 2 November 1997. He was held in incommunicado detention until 13 November. Police earlier failed to produce him in court despite an 11 November High Court order. During the hearing on his *habeas corpus* application, he continued to complain of severe pain due to his injuries suffered under torture.

One of the other coup detainees, Corporal Robert Chiulo, died in the week of 7 December at Maina Soko military hospital. Zambian authorities reportedly explained that he died of malaria, but reliable reports received by Amnesty International indicate that he died from injuries suffered during torture. The results of a post-mortem examination have reportedly been withheld from his widow.