

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 17/10/97

13 June 1997

Further information on UA 105/97 (AFR 17/05/97, 16 April 1997) and follow-up (AFR 17/09/97, 14 May) - Torture and ill-treatment / Possible prisoners of conscience / Medicial concern / Death in custody

CAMEROON Reports of torture amid large-scale arrests

---

Another of those detained following violent incidents in North-West Province in late March 1997 is reported to have died after torture.

**Pa Mathias Gwei**, married with children, was arrested in Oku, Bui Division. He was transferred to Bamenda and held incommunicado at the headquarters of the Gendarmerie Legion, the paramilitary police. Although critically ill as a result of torture, he is reported to have been denied medical treatment. He was finally admitted to hospital on 25 May 1997 where he died a few hours later. His death follows that of **Samuel Tita** (38), married with five children, who was reported to have died on 1 May as a result of torture.

Forty-nine detainees were released on 16 May, the day before parliamentary elections were held. A further 21 detainees have since been released. None had been charged with any offence.

Following the releases on 16 May, four detainees were reported to remain held at the Brigade Mixte Mobile (BMM), the security police, in Bamenda. However, an unknown number are believed to be still held, incommunicado, at the Gendarmerie Legion. All requests to the authorities for visits to detainees at the Gendarmerie Legion have been refused.

Some of those detained at the Gendarmerie Legion sustained serious injuries at the time of their arrest, including bullet and bayonet wounds; others were tortured and ill-treated in detention. Among those believed to be in urgent need of medical attention is **Zacharia Khan**, a traditional medicine practitioner, who was arrested in Bui Division. He was reported to have been severely beaten at the time of his arrest and also to have a bullet wound to his thigh. Although subsequently transferred to a military hospital in Bamenda, his condition deteriorated seriously, with the development of extensive gangrene. On the night of 30 May/1 June he was transferred, with two other detainees at the military hospital, to the capital, Yaoundé. He is currently held in a military camp hospital.

Some of those arrested in North-West Province had already been transferred to Yaoundé. Although some were later released, 16 who remained held at a gendarmerie headquarters in Yaoundé began a hunger-strike on 4 May in support of their demand to be either charged or released. Although at least two of these detainees were reported to have been released on 2 June, others including **Philip Tete**, his wife, **Regina Tete**, and their son remain in detention without charge. They have since been transferred to the Central Prison in Yaoundé, known as Nkondengui prison. A further 21 detainees were recently transferred from Bamenda to Yaoundé. Thirty-four of those arrested in connection with the events in North-West Province in late March are believed to be currently held in Nkondengui prison.

More than two months after the arrests, no charges have been brought against any of those detained. Amnesty International acknowledges the government's responsibility to bring to justice those responsible for the attacks in

North-West Province, during which 10 people died. However, many people appeared to have been detained only because of their association with the principal opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF).

Parliamentary elections took place on 17 May. Results announced by the Supreme Court on 6 June gave the ruling *Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounais*, Cameroon People's Democratic Movement, an absolute majority in the National Assembly. The SDF and another opposition party, the *Union nationale pour la démocratie et le progrès*, National Union for Democracy and Progress, had called on the Supreme Court to annul the election because of widespread fraud and irregularities.

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

- expressing deep concern about the death of Pa Mathias Gwei on 25 May, apparently as a result of torture and lack of medical care while held at Gendarmerie Brigade headquarters in Bamenda, and also that of Samuel Tita on 1 May;
- urging immediate and independent investigations into these deaths and all other allegations of torture and ill-treatment, in order to bring those responsible to justice;
- expressing concern that other detainees are reported to be critically ill, including Zacharia Khan, and urging that they receive all necessary medical care as a matter of urgency;
- while welcoming the recent releases of some 70 detainees held in connection with the events in North-West Province, expressing concern that others, including 34 held at the Central Prison in Yaoundé, remain held without charge or trial;
- acknowledging the government's responsibility to bring to justice those responsible for criminal acts, but requesting clarification of the reasons for the continued detention without charge or trial of those still held;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of anyone detained only because of their political opinions and activities, who has neither used nor advocated violence.

**APPEALS TO:**

President

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

**Fax: +237 221 699**

**Telegrams: President, Yaounde, Cameroon**

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

Deputy Prime Minister, responsible for territorial administration  
(Interior)

M. Gilbert Andzé Tsoungui  
Vice-Premier Ministre chargé de l'Administration territoriale  
Ministère de l'Administration territoriale  
1000 Yaoundé 4, Cameroon

**Telegrams: Vice-Premier Ministre Tsoungui, Yaounde, Cameroon**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Vice-Premier Ministre / Dear Deputy Prime Minister**

Secretary of State for National Security

M. Luc Loé  
Secrétaire d'Etat à la Sécurité intérieure

Sûreté nationale

1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

**Telegrams: Secrétaire d'Etat Loé, Yaounde, Cameroon**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Secrétaire d'Etat / Dear Minister of State**

Commander, Gendarmerie Legion

Colonel Mohamadou Ousseini

Provincial Legion Commander

Gendarmerie Legion

5000 Bamenda, North-West Province, Cameroon

**Telegrams: Gendarmerie Legion Commander, Bamenda, Cameroon**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Colonel / Dear Colonel Ousseini**

**COPIES TO:**

Mr Francis Fai Yengo, Governor of North-West Province, Governor's Office,  
5000 Bamenda, North-West Province, Cameroon

*Cameroon Post*, BP 1981, Yaoundé, Cameroon

*The Herald*, BP 3659 Messa, Yaoundé, Cameroon

*Le Messenger*, BP 5925, 11 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 your Section office, or the International Secretariat, if sending appeals after 30 July 1997.