

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 120/97

Torture/ill-treatment / Medical concern /
Prisoners of conscience

2 September 1997

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC) Canado Lokwa
Hilaire François Mukandile Mpanya
Jean Albert Mulumba Mukoma
Denis Bibanza
Fils Mukoka
Constantin Kabongo
Jean Pierre Tshilumba Mfuamba
Pascal Kapuwa Ilunga

and 7 others being held at the ANR

Jacques Kayena Lubanzadio
and three others being held at the SARM

Nineteen members of the main opposition party in DRC, the *Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social* (UDPS), the Union for Democracy and Social Progress, are being detained and ill-treated in two detention centres in the capital, Kinshasa. The detainees are reported to have been tortured with electro-shock batons during interrogation and are currently being held in conditions which amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Amnesty International is seriously concerned for their safety.

Many of the detainees are in urgent need of medical attention: Hilaire François Mukandile Mpanya, co-founder of the UDPS, has malaria fever; Pascal Kapuwa Ilunga is diabetic and needs regular medication; Fils Mukoka has a fractured arm; Constantin Kabongo has trouble walking because of wounds inflicted to his leg. All 19 are being denied access to their families or to medical care and legal counsel.

The men were arrested on 15 August 1997 during a peaceful demonstration organized by the UDPS to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the election of Etienne Tshisekedi as Prime Minister. Fifteen of them are being held at the *Agence Nationale des Renseignements* (ANR) security service, and four others are being held at a detention centre belonging to the former *Service d'action et de renseignement militaire* (SARM), Military Action and Intelligence Service.

Amnesty International believes that the detainees are prisoners of conscience held solely because they participated in a peaceful demonstration in support of the UDPS leader.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Dozens, possibly hundreds of arrests have been made in Kinshasa and other parts of Congo since the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre*, (AFDL), took power on 17 May 1997. The vast majority of these arrests are reported to be arbitrary, carried out without arrest warrants, by soldiers who do not have the legal power to make arrests under Congolese law. Detainees are often held incommunicado, sometimes in unofficial detention centres such as private residences. Reports of ill-treatment and torture are common.

Those arrested have included members of political opposition groups critical of the AFDL, journalists, human rights activists as well as many dignitaries, including ex-ministers of the former government. The AFDL have officially banned

political parties outside of the Alliance and suspended the Zairian constitution which guaranteed freedom of association and the right to hold peaceful demonstrations.

Forces of the AFDL are also reported to have committed other severe human rights violations in recent weeks in Kinshasa, including dozens of extrajudicial executions. Amnesty International has urged the authorities to investigate such allegations and bring the perpetrators to justice.

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

- expressing fears for the safety of the 19 UDPS members, arrested on 15 August during a demonstration and currently being ill-treated in detention;
- urging that the detainees be allowed immediate access to medical care and that immediate steps be taken to ensure they are no longer ill-treated;
- explaining that the detainees are prisoners of conscience held solely because they exercised their right to freedom of expression and association and calling for their immediate release;

if possible, also:

- calling for immediate steps to end the current trend of arbitrary arrests and incommunicado detention in the DRC by prohibiting the use of unofficial detention centres, including the presidential palace, and taking action within the law against military or civilian authorities who arrest and detain people without the legal authority to do so.

APPEALS TO:

Head of State

Son Excellence
Laurent-Désiré KABILA
Président de la République
Présidence de la République
Kinshasa-Ngaliema
Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: President Kabila, Kinshasa, DR Congo

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République/Dear President of the Republic

Minister of Justice

M. Celestin LWANGI
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
BP 3137
Kinshasa-Gombe
Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Kinshasa, DR Congo

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

Minister of the Interior

M. Mwenze KONGOLO
Ministre de l'Intérieur
Hôtel du Conseil exécutif
Kinshasa-Gombe
Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Kinshasa, DR Congo
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Commandant Anselme Masasu NINDAGA
Chef d'Etat-Major de l'AFDL
Ministère de la Défense
BP 4734
Kinshasa-Gombe
Democratic Republic of Congo

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

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 October 1997.