

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of extrajudicial execution

4 November 1993

CONGO

At least 15 people killed and dozens injured

Amnesty International is gravely concerned at reports that at least 15 and possibly many more people were killed by government troops after fighting broke out between government security forces and armed opposition supporters in the capital, Brazzaville, on 3 November 1993. Amnesty International fears that some of those killed may have been executed extrajudicially. The organization is appealing to the government to take immediate steps to prevent extrajudicial executions and the unlawful use of lethal force. Amnesty International is also gravely concerned at reports of killings by opposition groups.

The fighting reportedly broke out when government forces moved into the Bacongo suburb of Brazzaville where a clandestine opposition radio station began broadcasting on 31 October. The violence was sparked off by the kidnap on 1 November of two pro-government civil servants by armed opposition supporters demanding the release of two of their members arrested for illegally acquiring arms. The two civil servants were released on 2 November after the government issued an ultimatum.

On 3 November the security forces attacked the Bacongo opposition stronghold, ostensibly to seize weapons used by the opposition to attack members of the security forces and government supporters. At least 15 people were killed and 100 seriously injured, in circumstances which remain unclear. The security forces used automatic and heavy weapons, including rockets, in an apparently indiscriminate use of lethal force, in which many houses were destroyed or damaged. Five members of the security forces were also killed by opposition gunmen. Sporadic shooting was still being reported on 4 November.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Political violence broke out in Brazzaville in June 1993 when the second round of voting in parliamentary elections was declared invalid by the opposition.

At least 30 people were killed in the disturbances which followed. Human rights abuses were known to have been carried out by both government security forces and opposition supporters, many of whom were armed. In July, armed opposition supporters rampaged through Brazzaville ransacking homes and attacking supporters of President Pascal Lissouba.

An internationally-brokered agreement in August halted the disturbances. The second round of voting, which the opposition had boycotted in June due to alleged irregularities in the first round, went ahead in October with the government retaining a majority. Investigations into the first round of voting are still incomplete. Under the terms of the August peace agreement all armed civilians were to be disarmed. However, the recommendations of the agreement are not known to have been implemented and armed opposition militias appear to be

continuing to operate.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams, telexes and airmail letters either in French or in your own language:

- expressing concern at reports of indiscriminate and unlawful use of lethal force, including heavy weapons, by the security forces leading to the killing of more than 15 people and the wounding of many more;
- also condemning killings committed by opposition groups;
- urging the authorities to take immediate steps to prevent extrajudicial execution or the unlawful use of lethal force;
- urging the government to set up an independent and impartial commission of inquiry into the violence, to investigate whether there was unlawful use of lethal force by the security forces and to ensure that those found responsible for unlawful killings are brought to justice. The accountability of the security forces is not diminished by the fact that opposition groups commit similar acts;

APPEALS TO:

1) The President

Son Excellence

Monsieur Pascal LISSOUBA

Président de la République

Présidence de la République

BP 2006, BRAZZAVILLE, République du Congo

Telegrams: President Lissouba, Brazzaville, Congo

Telexes: 5210 KG, 5287 KG, 5519 KG

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President

2) Prime Minister

Général Jacques Joachim YHOMBI-OPANGO

Premier Ministre et chef du gouvernement

Bureau du Premier Ministre

BP 2096, BRAZZAVILLE, République du Congo

Telegrams: Premier Ministre Yhomi-Opango, Brazzaville, Congo

Telexes: 5210 KG, 5287 KG, 5519 KG

Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre / Dear Prime Minister

3) Chief of Defence Staff

Général Marcel ETA-ONKA

Chef de l'Etat Major des forces armées

Etat major des forces armées

Ministère de la Défense

BRAZZAVILLE, République du Congo

Telegrams: Chef de l'Etat Major des forces armées Eta-Onka, Brazzaville, Congo

Telexes: 5434 MIN DF, 5406 KG, 5414 KG, 5453 KG

Salutation: Monsieur le Chef de l'Etat Major / Dear Chief of Defence Staff

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of Justice

Monsieur André MATSIKA

Ministre d'Etat, président du Comité de la Législation

Comité de la Législation

BRAZZAVILLE, République du Congo

2) Rédacteur en chef

La Semaine Africaine (newspaper)
BP 2080, BRAZZAVILLE, République du Congo

3) Human rights league
Monsieur Norbert LAMINI
Comité nationale des droits de l'homme
BP 900, BRAZZAVILLE, République du 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 16 December 1993.