

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of torture / Legal concern

23 December 1992

MALAWI:

50 people arrested including Harry Chiume

Some 200 peaceful demonstrators are reported to have been arrested in Blantyre, one of Malawi's main towns, on Sunday 20 December 1992. They were apparently arrested for planning to march in protest at the imprisonment of Chakufwa Chihana, an international trade union leader who was convicted of sedition and sentenced to two years' imprisonment on 14 December 1992 (see UA 114/92, AFR 36/45/92, 14 December 1992). The police intervened to prevent the demonstration in Blantyre, claiming that police permission for the demonstration had not been sought or given. Amnesty International considers that demonstrators detained in these circumstances are prisoners of conscience, imprisoned for peacefully exercising their universally recognized right to freedom of association. Other peaceful demonstrations in Lilongwe and Mzuzu were also dispersed by armed police but no arrests are known to have been made.

Most of those arrested are reported to have been released. However, about 50 are reported to be still held in police custody. They have been held incommunicado and an associate of some of them who visited a police station in Blantyre to seek their release on bail was himself assaulted by the police. Those still detained include Harry Chiume, Chakufwa Chihana's lawyer and the interim Publicity Secretary of the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), and his wife. Political detainees arrested earlier in 1992 were subjected to assault, torture and extremely harsh conditions in police custody. Those now detained are also at risk of torture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Despite agreeing to hold a referendum next year on whether Malawi should remain a one-party state, the authorities have contrived to prevent any public activities by newly-created groups such as the AFORD and the United Democratic Front (UDF). The demonstrations on 20 December 1992 were apparently planned by the AFORD.

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

- expressing concern at reports of the arrests of several hundred peaceful demonstrators in Blantyre on 20 December 1992;
- expressing concern that some 50 of those arrested are reportedly being held incommunicado and urging that they be given immediate and regular access to their relatives, doctors and lawyers.

- requesting assurance that those arrested are in good health and have not been subjected to ill-treatment;

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of those still detained for taking part in a peaceful demonstration.

APPEALS TO:

1) H E The Life-President Ngwazi Dr H. Kamuzu Banda
Office of the President and Cabinet

Page 2 of UA 415/92

P/Bag 301
Lilongwe 3
Malawi

Telegrams: Life-President Banda, Lilongwe, Malawi
Telexes: 44389 PRES MI, 44766 Justice MI, 44113 EXTERNAL MI
Faxes: 265 731878

Salutation: Your Excellency

2) Hon. J Z U Tembo
Minister of State in the Office of the President
P/Bag 301
Lilongwe 3
Malawi

Telegrams: Minister of State Tembo, Lilongwe, Malawi

Salutation: Dear Minister

3) Mr MacWilliam Lunguzi
Inspector-General of Police
P/Bag 305
Lilongwe 3
Malawi

Telegrams: Inspector-General of Police Lunguzi, Lilongwe, Malawi.

Salutation: Dear Sir

4) Mr F.L. Makuta
Minister of Justice
Office of the President
PO Box 301
Lilongwe 3
Malawi

Telegrams: Minister of Justice Makuta, Lilongwe, Malawi

Salutation: Dear Sir

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

The Editor
The Weekly Post
Private Bag EF 352
Lusaka

Zambia

The Editor
The Weekend Gazette
PO Box 66070
Harare
Zimbabwe

Alliance for Democracy (AFORD)
PO Box 50007
Lusaka
Zambia

and to diplomatic representatives of Malawi accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 February 1993.