

DEFENDING THE DEFENDERS



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This bulletin is published quarterly by Amnesty International Africa Regional Office. It is meant to:

- **Raise the profile of Human Rights Defenders in Africa,**
- **Raise the plight and concerns of defenders and**
- **Provide updates for human rights defenders and networks for the protection of human rights defenders**

EDITORIAL

The UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (hereinafter known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders) was adopted, by consensus, by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/144 on 9 December 1998, following 13 years of a negotiation process involving Member States and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders describes human rights defenders as all those individuals, groups and organs of society that promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. In other words, human rights defenders are all those men and women who act on their own or collectively to contribute to the effective elimination of all violations of the fundamental rights and freedoms of peoples and individuals.

Human Rights Defenders work in various spheres of society and their work is inspired and guided by internationally recognised human rights standards. Their work includes, but not exclusive to, the search for truth and justice and strengthening the rule of law, democratic governance, and accountability. Furthermore, human rights defenders work for the protection of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights. This includes the struggle against gender, racial and sexual equality, environmental degradation, hunger, disease and poverty, the struggle for a fair standard of living, education and medical attention. Others are the struggle to end war and arms proliferation and to provide urgent assistance to victims of conflict or natural disasters.

Human rights defenders, human rights activists, human rights advocates, human rights workers, human rights militants, environmental and social activists, trade unionists, women and minority rights activists, student and youth leaders and other leaders defending the rights of the members of their professions are all terms that capture the same meaning and refer to the movement of individuals and groups who work to promote and protect a full range of universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Therefore, at the international level, the term 'Human Rights Defenders' (HRDs) is commonly used and accepted to capture this thematic area of human rights. HRDs are often the only voice in civil society prepared to expose abuses. HRDs are the main driving force behind change and improvements in the respect for human rights. Thematic work on human rights defenders, is about the legal as well as the physical protection of the work and rights of human rights defenders.

Protection for human rights defenders should be understood as all those efforts, political, legal and practical, that help improve the environment in which HRDs operate. Experience shows that the most effective protection measures are those that have collective implications and those that are driven by political will. Despite efforts by the human rights community, the situation of human rights in Africa continues to deteriorate. The situation of human rights in Africa as well as that of human rights defenders in the region continues to deteriorate.

The legal and political environment in which Human Rights Defenders operate is becoming more and more restrictive as a result of many factors, including: -

- anti terrorist legislation;
- weak democratic and judicial institutions;
- armed conflicts;
- increasing deterioration of the human rights situation;
- lack of and restricted funding opportunities for NGOs;
- weak civil society and government restrictions on NGO activism;
- political repression and
- the criminalizing of Human Rights Defenders.

Despite the protection afforded by the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, governments and armed opposition groups continue to take repressive action against Human Rights Defenders in order to counter exposure or criticism of state and armed opposition practices that violate human rights. More often than not, the courageous work of Human Rights Defenders puts them in positions of great personal and professional risk.

A call to defend the Human Rights Defenders is basically a call to strengthen the main actors in the human rights field and, by extension, strengthening the human rights movement, impacting the protection of human rights at a local level, and promoting awareness for advocacy of human rights at the international level.

To ensure that those who defend human rights can do so openly and fully without fear of being imprisoned, harassed, tortured or killed, human rights defenders must develop creative approaches to adapt to the changing local and regional dynamics in which we work.

Let's strive to defend the defenders!

Musa Gassama
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The objectives of Amnesty International's Human Rights Defenders Program in Africa

To campaign for the promotion and protection of the work and rights of human rights defenders by:

- Engaging HRDs from all sectors of society,
- Supporting network-building initiatives, building coalitions, developing skills and promoting greater visibility of marginalized groups, including women,
- Encouraging international support and solidarity for the protection of human rights defenders at risk; and
- Providing support to the United Nations' and the Africa regional special mechanisms on human rights defenders in Africa.

Defending human rights and human rights defenders is not the role of a few states and few activists - it is the duty to us all.

Together, we will raise awareness of the work and rights of human rights defenders.

Together, we will work for the protection of human rights defenders.

Together, we will work for the implementation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

Together, we will take united action when a human rights defender is under threat.

The African Commission: Establishment of a focal point on human rights defenders

Amnesty International welcomes the establishment by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Commission) of a *focal point* on Human Rights Defenders. At the end of its 34th Ordinary Session in Banjul, The Gambia, held from 6-20 November 2003, the African Commission appointed Commissioner Jainaba Johm as *focal point* on Human Rights Defenders in Africa.

The establishment of a *focal point* on Human Rights Defenders is an important first step to begin the full realization of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders in Africa through the African Commission.

Amnesty International urges the *focal point* to work towards stopping the harassment, intimidation, torture and even extra-judicial killings of human rights defenders in the continent, and ultimately strengthen the protections available to human rights defenders, consistent with internationally recognized standards.

When fully operational, the *focal point* would strengthen the ability of the African Commission to discourage future violations of the rights of human rights defenders, or reduce the possibility that they will occur.

By appointing a *focal point* on human rights defenders, the African Commission has shown a willingness to recognize the significant contribution human rights defenders make to the work of the Commission in its efforts to carry out its mandates under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The African Commission should seize this opportunity to initiate a process aimed at bringing to an end the impunity that now exists regarding violations of the rights of human rights defenders. Amnesty International calls on the African Commission to include the following in the mandate of the focal point:

- monitoring of the situation of human rights defenders in Africa.
- preparing and making public appropriate reports,
- considering individual cases and ensuring proper follow-up,
- taking preventive measures and urgent actions whenever necessary,
- making authoritative recommendations of general and specific nature on safeguards and changes in law and practice of African governments, and
- establishing effective cooperation with the office of the UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders.

Amnesty International calls on the African Commission to immediately take all practical measures to make the *focal point* fully operational so that it can function effectively and efficiently. Support from non-governmental organizations, civil society and the international community will also be essential for Commissioner Jainaba Johm to meet the challenges of the future.

State parties to the African Charter must cooperate fully with Commissioner Jainaba Johm, including by providing necessary human and material resources and ensuring the implementation of any recommendations that she may make in the discharge of her mandate.

Background

For several years, Amnesty International, together with other international and national human rights non-governmental organizations have called upon the African Commission to adopt a resolution that will recognize the fundamental human rights of human rights

defenders and strengthen the protection of those rights in Africa.

The UN Special Representative on Human Rights Defenders supports the development of a regional approach to the implementation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. In May 2002 in Pretoria, South Africa, the Special Representative attended the 31st Ordinary Session of the African Commission and urged the Commission to establish a mechanism for the protection of the rights of human rights defenders. In her most recent report to the 59th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights, the Special Representative expressed that "a regional approach has helped the Special Representative to call upon commitments made by States at the regional level, in addition to their international commitments, for the implementation of her mandate."

Similarly, the Kigali Declaration adopted by the African Union Ministerial Conference on Human Rights in May 2003, called on African governments "to take appropriate steps to implement the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders in Africa.

**Regional Focus:
Central and Southern Africa
The Durban Forum:**

Practical work to provide legal and strategic support and protection to human rights defenders in Africa has been based on extensive consultations among regional and international NGOs and with individual human rights defenders following a series of national, sub-regional and regional workshops which culminated into the All African Conference on Human Rights Defenders in November 1998. During these consultations, regional NGOs participated and signed the resolutions on human rights defenders that came out of the All Africa Conference (the Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Action on Human Rights Defenders, 1998). The outcome of this Conference was fed into the Paris Summit on Human Rights Defenders in 1998, leading to the adoption of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders in the same year.

Amnesty International (AI), The International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), the Observatory (FIDH and OMCT) and HIVOS co-sponsored a regional forum in Durban, South Africa, from the 28 June to 2 July 2003 to examine the regional challenges that Human Rights Defenders are facing, provide training on international instruments for protection, and establish regional plans of actions. These organisations have greatly contributed to enhancing the protection of human rights defenders through sustained actions, including collaborating with

the UN and particularly with the Special Representative on human rights defenders, as well as lobbying with various regional inter-governmental institutions (Organisation Of American States, the European Union, the African Commission, etc).

The 2003 Human Rights Defenders Forum for Central and Southern Africa was part of the shared efforts of the organisers to contribute towards the effective promotion and protection of human rights defenders in the Africa region. *Amnesty International* together with *the Solidarity Peace Trust*, the local partner in South Africa, co-hosted the Forum.

Delegates came from DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Chad, South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Participants included:-

- The regional representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Pretoria,
- Desk Officer for the UN HRD Mandate,
- Representative of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights,
- Asia Forum Coordinator,
- Frontline for the Protection of HRDs,
- HIVOS,
- Peace Brigade International,
- World Organisation Against Torture,
- International Service for Human Rights
- Amnesty International delegates and
- Article 19, Johannesburg Office.

The training exercises on the UN special procedures was considered helpful to local defenders in strengthening communications with the UN Mandate and hopefully help increase communications from the Africa Region. It was noted that defenders needed to be aware of the existence and importance of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Peace Brigade International (PBI) shared their experience in Latin America, in particular, Colombia and explained how their organization provided protection through international presence to accompany HRDs at risk.

Participants from local NGOs shared their personal experiences. They referred to the violation of the right to life, extra-judicial killings, arbitrary detention and rape, defamation, social stigmatisation, torture, arrest and detention, bogus criminal charges, 'surveillance' as most common violations endured by defenders in the region. Many noted the total break down of law and ineffectiveness of the judicial system in their countries and the resulting impunity as major obstacles to their safety and work. The impact of on-going conflicts and of the new counter-terrorism measures were also put forth

as obstacles to HRDs work and safety. The need to build a sense of solidarity within the African civil society was also expressed by participants.

The Forum urged HRDs to put "gender" at the heart of human rights work, support women activists and address their distinct needs by contributing to the development of an enabling environment and also protect women activists by addressing their gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities.

On the role of the media, it was noted that public support for the activities of human rights defenders is in itself an important means of protection for defenders. It was noted that there was need to engage local and regional media institutions and generate media interest and public awareness in HRDs work and the implications and impact of government policies and practices that defenders seek to eliminate or promote.

This Forum, the first of its kind, articulated the idea of cross regional fertilisation, by bringing together experiences from the Americas, Asia and Africa and the UN Mandate; as well as key international NGO players in the Africa Region to support local initiatives.

Bringing African HRDs into close contact with key international NGO players in the region was indeed helpful. On issues relating to regional challenges, the need for accountability and transparency on the part of HRDs so as to maintain credibility was raised during the Forum. It was noted that the Human Rights Defenders Unit within the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has gathered a lot of experience in the legal protection of HRDs and that the African Commission has a lot to learn from this experience as it struggles to devise a mechanism for the protection of HRDs in Africa.

Issues relating to the impact of terrorism and anti terrorist legislations and anti-impunity laws on the work of human rights defenders and the promotion and protection of human rights were discussed. The importance of solidarity, networking and a regional network building program in the protection of human rights defenders was also highlighted and the follow up would be to focus on networking and building a strong network for the protection of human rights defenders in Africa.

Somalia / Somaliland Human Rights Defenders issue Declaration

As the four-month-long Somali Peace and Reconciliation Conference resumed at a new Kenyan venue and with a new chairperson, Somali human rights activists issued an important declaration founded on their many years of

mostly unacknowledged and risk-fraught human rights defence work.

Somali human rights defenders from 23 organizations, meeting in Hargeisa from 10 to 18 February 2002, declared that they will "*increase the struggle against human rights abuses, such as arbitrary killings, torture, arbitrary detention and kidnapping, and work for the equal rights of all, with full protection for vulnerable groups such as women and minorities*". They affirmed support for women human rights defenders campaigning for the eradication of violence against women and for women's full political participation in building democratic governance.

In addition, they called on all Somali political authorities to "*publicly recognize the legitimate role of human rights defenders in the protection and promotion of human rights, as set out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders*", and that "*human rights defenders will not be subject to reprisals for these activities*".

They also called on the international community to protect human rights defenders at risk, and assist them to build up the capacities of their organizations. The declaration was adopted in the presence of the UN Independent Expert for Somalia, Dr. Ghanim Alnajjar.

Human rights defenders in conflict-ridden central and southern Somalia face daily dangers of arbitrary killing or detention by faction militias or ransom kidnapping by gunmen whom faction leaders have done little or nothing to suppress in the areas they claim to control. In Puntland, civil society organizations documenting abuses receive little tolerance from the political authorities and are at risk as a result of the unresolved armed conflict. In Somaliland in contrast, where there is some long-established peace, general respect for human rights, a largely free press and a multi-party election process, activists are concerned mainly about the very poor justice system and declining political representation for women and minorities.

In November 2002, Amnesty International's Open Letter to the Somalia Peace Conference supported the demands of civil society groups attending it for greater priority for human rights and not just a sharing-out of violently-acquired power and its gains between armed faction leaders.

The Somali Human Rights Defenders Declaration took up the concerns of other Somali activists at the peace talks and reiterated that there should be "*no impunity granted to those who have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity ...if they were allowed to hold government office they could commit such crimes again*".

"The outcome of the peace talks should not be a government of warring faction-leaders giving themselves total impunity for their gross violations of human rights", said Amnesty International. "Somali political leaders who believe in peace and human rights must unite now to stop the cease-fire violations, arbitrary killings, rape, kidnapping and financial extortion."

So far there is little indication from the armed faction leaders that they are committed to rescue Somalia from a seemingly endless crisis threatening regional peace and security.

"The regional and international sponsors of the peace talks must strive harder to secure this commitment and see it in action as a basic pre-requisite for any new transitional government," they said.

Background

Meeting in Somaliland at a workshop organised by Amnesty International, Novib and International Cooperation for Development in the only safe area of the former state of Somalia which disintegrated in 1991, the participants included human rights defenders from Mogadishu, such as the Peace and Human Rights Network, Coalition of Grassroots Womens' Organizations and Dr Ismail Jumale Human Rights Organization; Dulmidiid Centre for Human Rights from Puntland regional state; Isha Human Rights Organization from Baidoa; Kisima Peace and Human Rights Organization from Kismayu; and Nagaad Women's Coalition, Hornwatch and several others from Somaliland.

Somaliland's 12-year government is still campaigning for international recognition. The UN-supported Transitional National Government (TNG) holds little power even in Mogadishu.

The UN arms embargo is constantly violated by neighbouring states and arms dealers supplying weapons to warlords, as a UN panel of experts exposed. Two rival coalitions of over a dozen armed clan-based factions - one linked to the TNG and the other backed by Ethiopia - continue to struggle for power. Violations of the October 2002 cease-fire persist unpunished.

AI Index: AFR 52/002/2003, (Public) News Service No: 040, 21 February 2003.

The United Nations Mandate on Human Rights Defenders

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders: The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders should represent a clear commitment to acknowledge, promote and protect the work and rights of human rights

defenders around the world. The recognition by the international community of its responsibilities in this area was rightly considered by many as a turning point in improving the protection of human rights defenders.

By subscribing to the principles that the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders underpins, States should acknowledge the important role of international cooperation in protecting individuals, groups and associations in their work, which contributes, to the effective elimination of all violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The continuous reporting of violations of the rights of human rights defenders in many parts of the world should be a matter of serious concern.

The mandate of the Special Representative: The mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights defenders is contained in Commission Resolution 2000/61. In paragraph 3 of this resolution, the Special Representative is requested to report on the situation of human rights defenders in all parts of the world and on possible means to enhance their protection in full compliance with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The main activities of the Special Representative shall be:

- To seek, receive examine and respond to information on the situation and the rights of anyone, acting individually or in association with others, to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- To establish cooperation and conduct dialogue with Governments and other interested actors on the promotion and effective implementation of the Declaration;
- To recommend effective strategies for the better protection of human rights defenders and follow up on these recommendations.

During the past three years (of the functioning of the Special Representative on HRDs), the Special Representative on HRDs has undertaken 5 (five) country visits. However, she is yet to visit countries in Africa.

Consultations with the UN Mandate: The first consultation the Special Representative, **Madam Hina Jilani** undertook in Africa was in April 2001 when she attended the launching of the West Africa Human Rights Defenders Campaign organized in Dakar, Senegal by Amnesty International.

In May 2002, with the support of the Observatory (FIDH and OMCT), the Special Representative, attended the 31st Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in Pretoria, South Africa.

To support the implementation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, Amnesty International supported the participation of the Special Representative, Madam Hina Jilani in the July 2003 Consultative Forum on human rights defenders in Durban, South Africa where she raised the plight of Women Human Rights Defenders in Africa.

Amnesty International also supported the training of 20 human rights defenders from Central and Southern Africa in July 2003 by one of the Desk officers for the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Sergio Vierra de Mello Human Rights Defenders Award

The African Union (AU) which replaces the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 2000, following the adoption of the Constitutive Act of the AU in the that year, has announced its intention to launch, in collaboration with the UN High Commission for Human Rights, a *Sergio Vierra de Mello Human Rights Defenders' Award* as a tribute to this human rights defender who gave his life in the service of peace in Iraq.

According to the AU, the objective of the award is to encourage Africans in general and African human rights defenders in particular to become key players in the promotion of democracy, good governance and development in Africa as the key pillars of human and peoples' rights.

The AU further stated that the Award would not only send a strong signal that Africa is deeply committed to the development of its human rights agenda "to our people and our partners", but also to invite the African civil society to get resolutely involved in the realization of our common goals and aspirations for a more united continent; united against impunity and a continent that upholds the respect for the rights and dignity of the human person.

Through the *Sergio Vierra de Mello's Award*, the African Union wants "to encourage Africans living in Africa and abroad to join hands in solidarity with their sisters and brothers of the other continents to combat terrorism, exploitation, inhuman, degrading, cruel treatment, and discrimination in all its manifestations".

Sergio Vierra de Mello was the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in charge of the UN Iraq operation, killed in a bomb attack on the UN compound which killed many other UN and Iraqi staff, and injured several others. Victims included other UNHCHR staff, Mona Rishmawi, former Independent Expert for Somalia and some of the world's most respected refugee experts and advocates.

Country Focus: The persecution of human rights defenders in Africa

During 2003, human rights activists were targets of repressive action by governments and armed opposition groups in Africa. Dozens of journalists were arrested during the year, all over the region.

Liberia: Under President Charles Taylor, who relinquished power in August 2003, hundreds of human rights activists were repeatedly subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and ill-treatment in attempts to stifle criticism of the government's appalling human rights record.

Aloysius Toe, a leading human rights activist, went into hiding in late October 2002 after police raided his home and briefly detained his wife and three other human rights activists. These arrests followed the launch of a campaign by the *Liberia Coalition of Human Rights Defenders* to secure the release of journalist Hassan Bility and other human rights activists. Hassan Bility was held incommunicado without charge and tortured for almost six months.

When he emerged from hiding on 4 November 2002, Aloysius Toe was arrested and charged with treason. The charge was based solely on a widely available document, published by the armed opposition, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, which he was alleged to have received by e-mail. After repeated adjournments of his trial, the charge against him was finally dropped in July 2003.

Angola: Targeting of human rights defenders promoting housing rights in Angola

José Rasgadinho was elected as Coordinator of the Boavista Ward United Residents' Commission on 16 June 2001 after residents were threatened with eviction. On 3 July 2001 José Rasgadinho was arrested at his home at 4.00 a.m. and seven other residents, including Francisco Luís dos Santos, another member of the Commission, were arrested later that day. They were accused of organizing violence and possessing firearms. They were interrogated and then released on 4 July 2001 for lack of evidence against them.

José Rasgadinho was rearrested on 11 September 2003. He and other former Boavista residents had been attending the trial of one of their colleagues who had been charged in connection with the planning of a demonstration to draw attention to their housing needs.

This was reportedly the eighth time he had been arrested in connection with his non-violent efforts, first to try to prevent forced evictions, and then to try to ensure that the victims of forced eviction, who had to live in tents for over two years, were given alternative housing. He was released uncharged on 15 September 2003, but his safety remained a concern to Amnesty International.

During his detention, police reportedly refused to allow José Rasgadinho to receive his medication for hypertension which his lawyer had brought to the DNIC on 12 September.

Amnesty International believes that José Rasgadinho has been harassed and arrested solely because of his work as Coordinator of the residents' commission which has received attention in the national and international media.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Human rights activists and journalists throughout the DRC have been ill treated, harassed, and menaced by the authorities. Dozens of people have been detained in Uvira, for having criticized the RCD-Goma, the most influential armed opposition group, for collaborating with enemy forces.

Donatien Kisangani Mukatamwina, known as "Kisangani", is a member of the non-governmental human rights organization *Solidarité-Echange pour le Développement Intégral* (Solidarity-Exchange for Integral Development - SEDI), in Uvira, South-Kivu, Eastern DRC. He was arrested by officials of the RCD-Goma at the Kavumvira border crossing between the DRC and Burundi on 27 June 2003 and was taken to the office of the Direction de la Sécurité et Renseignements (Security and Intelligence Directorate - DSR) in Uvira. He was reportedly accused of links to Congolese Mayi-Mayi militia groups opposed to the RCD-Goma. He remained in detention for thirteen days, without charge, where he was allegedly beaten and threatened with death by officials of the RCD-Goma.

Ethiopia: The persecution of Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association officials.

Amnesty International is concerned about the suspension of the Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association (EFJA), a previously officially registered

NGO, and wishes to prevent arrests of EFJA officials as human rights defenders.

The EFJA in Addis Ababa is the voluntary professional association representing and defending the private press in Ethiopia. The EFJA has existed for about 10 years and has been officially registered as an NGO since 2000. There are about 110 media publications in Ethiopia, mostly weekly or monthly private newspapers or magazines critical of the government and all operating under pressure.

On 10 November 2003 the Ministry of Justice wrote to EFJA ordering its suspension and closure on grounds that it had not applied for renewal of license and had not submitted audited reports for the last three years, as required by laws of NGO registration.

The Minister of Justice was reported recently as criticising the EFJA for "undermining responsible journalism".

The EFJA is one of the main defenders of freedom of opinion and expression in Ethiopia, and of the rights of journalists when they have been arrested. It has kept international media organizations informed of these issues.

The new Press law would replace the 1992 Press Law under which hundreds of private press journalists, editors, publishers, owners and distributors have been arrested in recent years and scores sentenced to prison terms. Many were prisoners of conscience and AI campaigned for their release.

Amnesty International is concerned that the proposed new Press Law includes harsher conditions for the press than the previous one and could lead to more journalists being imprisoned as prisoners of conscience.

The private press has published many articles critical of the government on human rights and democracy issues but where government officials have considered themselves defamed the government has resorted to the Press Law and penalties of imprisonment for vague offences.

The Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) has published a report on the EFJA ban and another on the severe beating of journalist **Araya Tesfamariam** on 1 October 2003 by unidentified men in police uniform.

Kifle Mulat, the EFJA president, has received prestigious international media awards and has been imprisoned in the past as a former prisoner of conscience unfairly convicted for Press Law offences. He has asked for international solidarity and has the support of media organizations such as International Federation of Journalists (IFJ, of which EFJA is an affiliate), Committee to Protect Journalists, Reporters sans Frontieres, and Article 19.

Chad: Chadian Woman Human Rights Defender and Lawyer Received Highest Award of Human Rights Movement For International Criminal Justice Work!

Jacqueline Moudeina, the lawyer for the victims of the former dictator of Chad, Hissène Habré, received the 2002 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders. She took enormous risks by filing complaints in Chad against a number of Habré's accomplices, many of whom are still in positions of power. She also is one of the lawyers in the case against Habré himself in Senegal, where he lives in exile. As one of the few women lawyers in Chad, Jacqueline Moudeina gives much of her time to the local NGO, ATPDH. On 11 June 2001, when she took part in a peaceful sit-in to protest against the fraudulent elections, a security squad, led by one of the men she is suing, threw a grenade at her. Jacqueline Moudeina had to go to Paris for treatment.

On the 18 of March 2002, with support from ATPDH and the Observatory for the protection of human rights defenders, she decided to sue Mahamat Wakaye, Mahamat Idriss and Taher Babouri, all members of the Police force, for assault and grave bodily wounds. The case has been dragging in the courts. According to the Observatory, the Court in N'djamena, on the 11 of November 2003, decided to release the three accused persons.

Zimbabwe: Zimbabwean lawyer was named Human Rights Lawyer of the Year!

In October 2003, **Beatrice Mtetwa** was taken into custody by Zimbabwean police and beaten up. After her beating by police she needed treatment for severe bruises and cuts to her face, throat, arms, ribcage and legs. Police had been called to assist her when her vehicle was attacked by car thieves but instead took her into custody for allegedly driving while intoxicated.

Beatrice Mtetwa has represented Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (the publishers of the Daily News), including in a recent successful application to the administrative court to allow the Daily News to resume publication. However, on 20 December, one day after the court ruling, armed police shut down the Daily News print works.

Mrs. Mtetwa defended and won acquittal for the "Guardian's" former Harare correspondent Andrew Meldrum, when he was tried for "publishing a falsehood", a criminal charge carrying a jail term of two years. She also won court rulings ordering the government to allow Meldrum to stay in the country but he was illegally abducted and expelled in May 2003.

The award, from the legal and human rights campaigning group "Justice" and the civil rights campaigners "Liberty", was presented to Beatrice Mtetwa at the Law Society Hall in London. The citation praised her "courage and commitment to human rights whilst working in an environment hostile to lawyers and the rule of law and her disregard to the risks of her personal safety". It is a great tribute not only -to her alone but also to so many other committed Zimbabwean lawyers and other human rights defenders who are trying to defend human rights and the rule of law in Zimbabwe.

Cameroon: Continuous harassment by the authorities

Since the publication of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) report on Cameroon at the end of October 2003 - La Torture au Cameroun : une réalité « banale », une impunité systématique - human rights defenders who have helped the work of FIDH, have been publicly attacked in the media and continuously harassed. Some have been kept under heavy surveillance.

Following the submission of the report to the United Nations Committee Against Torture on the occasion of the examination of the third periodic report of the government of Cameroon, several statements were made by the authorities in the media to discredit the work of FIDH and the local NGOs. They were accused of wanting to tarnish the image of the country and misinform the international community.

During the same period in November 2003, Madeleine Afité, a representative of ACAT-Littoral in Douala, reported that she was a victim of many anonymous telephone calls and that the keys to her office were stolen. On 28 November 2003, her house was surrounded by police officers.

Also, Franka Nzoukakang Executive Director (HRDG) has identified unknown people coming to the office and a series of vehicles that have been following her movements between 22 and 27 of November 2003.

On 10 December 2003, the International Human Rights Day, many local radios, particularly a local radio in

Maroua broadcasting in the North - where the Mouvement pour la défense des droits de l'Homme et des libertés (MDDHL) led by Abdoulaye Math is based - did broadcast statements discrediting human rights defenders in Cameroon and describing them as "crooks tarnishing the image of the country". Amnesty International, like FIDH and their league members, condemns the harassment of these defenders. These attacks are aimed at silencing anyone who dares to denounce human rights violations in Cameroon.

ACTION REQUIRED: Please write to the authorities and the representative of Cameroon in your country asking the Cameroonian government to:

- Ensure the physical security and integrity of all human rights defenders, in Cameroon, particularly Nzounkekang Franka, Abdoulaye Math, Madeleine Afité and the members of their respective organizations;
- stop further acts of intimidation, attack and harassment against human rights defenders in Cameroon;
- Adhere to and respect the "Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms was adopted, by consensus, by the General Assembly in its resolution 53/144 on 9 December 1998, particularly Article 1, which provides that 'Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels.'"

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Upcoming global campaign: *Stopping Violence Against Women in Africa:*

On 8 March 2004, International Women's Day, Amnesty International will launch a global campaign to expose and challenge violence against women (VAW) and girls and to work towards the eradication of one of the most widespread of human rights violations. Women in Africa are subject to violence committed by spouses, and other members of their communities, including those responsible for 'harmful traditional practices', and by warring parties in situations of conflict. Women's opportunities for justice and redress are doubly limited – by all the reasons which encourage impunity in any case, and by reasons specific to their gender.

KEY EVENTS TO REMEMBER: 1998 to 2003

- 4 November 1998:** The Johannesburg Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the All Africa Conference on Human Rights Defenders, Johannesburg
- 9 December 1998:** The Adoption of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders by the UN General Assembly.
- 28-30 June 1999:** The only meeting of the Johannesburg Continuation Committee meeting in Dakar, Senegal
- 24-25 June 2000:** The Accra Mini Consultation on Human Rights Defenders Campaign in West Africa
- 10-12 April 2001:** The Dakar Consultation Workshop on HRDs for West and Central Africa
- 24-26 July 2001:** The Bamako consultation on women Human Rights Defenders in West Africa
- 14 February 2003:** Somali Human Rights Defenders Workshop
- 1-2 July 2003:** The Durban Human Rights Defenders Forum for Central and Southern Africa
- 6-20 November 2003:** At the 34th Ordinary Session in Banjul, held from The Gambia, the African Commission created a focal point on Human Rights Defenders in Africa.
- 10 December 2003:** The African Union announced its intention to launch *Sergio Vierra de Mello Human Rights Defenders Award*.
- 8 March 2004:** Women's Day!
- 10 December:** International Human Rights day!

PLEASE DO SEND US YOUR COMMENTS, UPDATES AND ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT EDITION!
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