

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 17/01/95

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*MEDICAL CONCERN*

**Prisoners in need of medical attention  
CAMEROON**

Twenty-eight members of an opposition party, the *Union pour la démocratie et le progrès* (UNDP), National Union for Democracy and Progress, have been detained for six months in Maroua, Far-North Province, Cameroon. They were charged with "complicity in joint acts of looting, assault occasioning death, obstruction of the public highway and causing slight bodily harm" following clashes in Maroua on 30 July 1994 ("*complicité de co-action de pillage en bande, coups mortels, obstacle sur une voie publique et blessures légères*"). There were clashes during which a number of UNDP members threw stones at government minister Hamadou Moustapha following his arrival in Maroua. Hamadou Moustapha is also a member of the UNDP and was criticized for remaining in the government of President Paul Biya. One person was killed and several wounded.

Some people were apparently arrested at the time of the clashes, but most were arrested at their homes later in the day or in the days that followed. AI believes that some may be prisoners of conscience, detained solely because of their opposition to the participation of UNDP members in the present government. During 1994, dozens of critics and opponents of the government, including members of opposition political parties, trade unionists and journalists, were detained, usually without charge or trial.

A number of the UNDP detainees are reported to be in need of medical attention and are without access to treatment. No medicines are provided by the authorities and very little by way of food. Each prisoner receives a daily ration of 200 grammes of plain cereal and prisoners are dependent upon their relatives to supplement this and to provide necessary medicines. Prison conditions in Maroua are very poor and there is severe overcrowding. The prison was built to house 300 people, but until recently held over one thousand prisoners; some were transferred due to overcrowding and the current prison population stands at 873.

Around ten of those arrested in July 1994 have requested admission to hospital in order to obtain medical attention which is lacking in the prison. One of them - Ali Ousmane, who is aged 70 - has finally been admitted after repeated requests. He suffers from an inguinal hernia and urinary retention which requires catheterization. According to reliable sources, those who are most urgently in need of attention are the following:

- Saïdou Katchalla, aged 40, who is suffering from diabetes insipidus.
- Hamadou Mazoumai, aged 62, who is urinating blood and experiences lumbar pain. He also has an injury to a knee caused during a fall during an attack of vertigo.

- Yougouda Garga, aged 62, who has pulmonary tuberculosis.
- Hamadou Garga, aged 31, who has infected sores on both legs due to scabies.
- Hamadou Siddi, aged 25, who has suffered hearing loss in one ear since his imprisonment.

Amnesty International is concerned by the lack of proper medical care in the prison in Maroua and is appealing to the authorities to make arrangements to provide medical attention. According to reliable sources, an estimated 200 prisoners died in Maroua prison during 1994 due to malnutrition and the lack of medical care; 87 of these deaths are reported to have occurred in the months of August and September. Although tuberculosis is believed to have affected around 100 prisoners, only six are known to be receiving treatment and this is provided by nurses from a religious community.

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To: Medical professionals  
From: Medical Office / Research Department - Africa  
Date: 27 January 1995

*MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION*

**Prisoners in need of medical attention  
CAMEROON**

**Keywords**

Theme: ill-health/medical care

**Summary**

In July 1994 28 members of one of Cameroon's opposition parties, the *Union pour la démocratie et le progrès*, were arrested in the town of Maroua. It is believed that some of them may be prisoners of conscience. Several are in need of medical attention and are without access to proper care. Please see the information attached.

**Recommended Actions**

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses below:

- raising the cases of the detainees named on the attached, expressing concern that they are in need of medical care and asking whether any medical attention has been provided to them
- urging that they are provided with all the medical care they require without further delay
- expressing concern at the lack of medical care available in the prison and at the resulting high level of deaths in Maroua prison; urging that arrangements are made to provide proper medical care in the prison in accordance with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners

**Addresses**

M. Seidou Mounchipou  
Gouverneur de la Province de  
l'Extrême-Nord  
Palais de Gouvernance  
4300 Maroua, Cameroon

M. Tsala Manga  
Régisseur de la prison civile de Maroua  
Prison civile de Maroua  
4300 Maroua, Cameroon

Professeur Joseph Owona  
Ministre de la Santé publique  
Ministère de la Santé publique  
1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

**Copies to:**

Professeur René Essomba  
Ordre des médecins du Cameroun  
BP 219  
1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon