

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 17/04/97

9 April 1997

Further information (9) on UA 250/96 (AFR 17/06/96, 31 October 1996) and follow-ups (AFR 17/08/96, 12 November, AFR 17/09/96, 15 November, AFR 17/11/96, 11 December, AFR 17/12/96, 13 December, AFR 17/13/96, 18 December, AFR 17/01/97, 14 January 1997, AFR 17/02/97, 23 January, AFR 17/03/97, 17 March) - Prisoner of conscience / Fear of further prisoners of conscience

CAMEROON Alain Christian Eyoum Nangué, journalist

Alain Christian Eyoum Nangué, a journalist working for the independent newspaper *Le Messenger* and its satirical supplement, *Le Messenger Popoli*, was conditionally released (*liberté provisoire*) on 27 March 1997 following a ruling by the Supreme Court. He had been imprisoned for more than two months.

Alain Christian Eyoum Nangué was arrested on 22 January 1997 and imprisoned at the Central Prison, New Bell, in Douala. In October 1996 he had been sentenced to a one-year prison term and a fine after being convicted of insulting the President of the Republic and members of the National Assembly (*outrage par injure fait au Président de la République ainsi qu'aux membres de l'Assemblée nationale*). The chief editor of *Le Messenger*, Pius Njawe, who received a six month prison term after being convicted of the same offence, was arrested on 29 October 1997 and imprisoned for 17 days before the Supreme Court ordered his conditional release.

Pius Njawe and Alain Christian Eyoum Nangué were among some nine journalists convicted of criminal offences and sentenced to prison terms during 1996 as a result of their professional activities. Other journalists were arrested and detained for short periods before being released without charge. Freedom of expression is increasingly under attack in Cameroon as legislative and presidential elections approach. Legislative elections originally scheduled for early March 1997 have been postponed until 17 May 1997. The presidential election is scheduled for October 1997.

This UA will now close. Many thanks to all who sent appeals during this action, which Amnesty International believes has been an effective response to the situation facing journalists in Cameroon.

Participants may send a further round of letters:

- welcoming the release of Alain Christian Eyoum Nangué on 27 March 1997, but urging that his release be made unconditional;
- reiterating concern about the increasing number of journalists who have been convicted and sentenced to prison terms solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression;
- urging that no other journalist be imprisoned as a prisoner of conscience;
- reminding the government of Cameroon of its obligations to guarantee the right to freedom of expression under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which it ratified in 1984.

APPEALS TO:

President

Son Excellence M. Paul Biya
Président de la République
Palais de l'Unité
1000 Yaoundé, République du Cameroun

Fax: +237 221 699

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President Biya

Prime Minister

Mr Peter Mafany Musonge

Premier Ministre

Cabinet du Premier Ministre

Immeuble Étoile

1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Fax: +237 235 765

Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre / Dear Prime Minister

Minister of Justice

M. Laurent Ezzo

Ministre de la Justice, Garde des Sceaux

Ministère de la Justice

1000 Yaoundé, République du Cameroun

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of State for Communication

M. Augustin Kontchou Kouomegni

Ministre d'Etat chargé de la Communication,

Ministère de la Communication

BP 1588, Yaoundé, République du Cameroun

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

- *Le Messenger*, BP 5925, 11 Boulevard de la Liberté, Douala, République du Cameroun
- *Cameroon Post*, BP 1981, Yaoundé, République du Cameroon
- *The Herald*, BP 3659 Messa, Yaoundé, République du Cameroun
- *La Nouvelle Expression*, BP 15333, 12 rue Prince de Galles, Douala, République du Cameroun

and to diplomatic representatives of Cameroon accredited to your country.