

UA 176/97 Cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment /
Health concern / Probable prisoners of conscience 16 June 1997

CAMEROON 40 members and supporters of the Social Democratic Front (SDF), including:
Alhadji Sani, SDF Provincial Coordinator for Central Province
Prince Fesco William Manga, SDF Divisional Coordinator for Fako Division, South-West Province

Some 40 members and supporters of the principal opposition political party in Cameroon, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), have been arrested and detained in the period surrounding parliamentary elections which took place on 17 May 1997. Amnesty International considers that the conditions in which they are held amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and that there is serious risk to their health. Most, if not all, appear to be prisoners of conscience, detained only because of their peaceful political opinions and activities.

The election results were announced by the Supreme Court in the capital Yaoundé on 6 June. The ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement, *Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounais*, received an absolute majority with 109 seats. The main opposition parties, the SDF and the *Union nationale pour la démocratie et le progrès*, National Union for Democracy and Progress, received 43 and 13 seats respectively. Both parties had earlier called on the Supreme Court to annul the elections because of widespread fraud and irregularities. International observers noted that the elections had been marred by cases of fraud and intimidation.

Thirteen SDF members and supporters were arrested on 6 June during a peaceful demonstration outside the Supreme Court: **Alhadji Sani**, SDF Provincial Coordinator for Central Province, **Orlando Munjo**, **Simon Fogue**, **Salomon Nongni**, **Namen Tchabda**, **Germain Kue**, **Youssoufa Yaya**, **Wilfred Muyo**, **Pahi Lezegning**, **Andre Obama**, **Diamta Diamta**, **Le Serge Satong** and **Akam John Assam**.

On 5 June **Prince Fesco William Mango**, SDF Divisional Coordinator for Fako Division, in South-West Province, had been arrested apparently for being in possession of an official document signed by the Secretary General of the SDF. **Mr Du Du Wimgang** was reported to have been arrested on 7 June when he went to provide food to Prince Fesco William Mango.

Although according to the law, detainees must be brought before a judicial authority within 72 hours to be charged or released, these 15 detainees were not brought before the public prosecutor's office (*le parquet*) until 11 June. They were charged with inciting revolt; no date for their trial has been set. They are being held at a police station in the *premier arrondissement* of Yaoundé.

Twenty-five other SDF members and supporters are reported to have been arrested between 15 May and 5 June in South-West Province. They are being held without charge or trial in Buea. They are reported to be held in administrative detention on the orders of the Governor of South-West Province. Administrative detention for an indefinite period without referral to the courts is provided by the Law relating to the Maintenance of Law and Order, No. 90/054 of 19 December 1990. Those detained are: **Englebort Njaakea Fontu**, **Jonah Samba**, **Jonathan Meh**, **Martin Ashu Agbor**, **John Ndum Mbuton**, **John Bakilam**, **Godlove Nche Mbah**, **Jacob Ngoh Achah**, **Fidelis Achonga Nkeng**, **Oscar Atamson**, **Godlove Teko Gwe**, **Ngube Ndode**, **Joseph Mendong**, **Alfred Ndocho**, **Eric Akwa**, **Anthony Ngam Ewumba**, **Michael Jani Babila**, **Edwin Mbawa**, **George Anyi**, **Peter Ajah**, **Ambrose Anyi Abah**, **Mathias Tembug**,

Horace Agwo Awum, Fosam Dinga and Valentine Agien. They appear to have been detained only because of their membership or support of the SDF.

Conditions of detention in police stations, gendarmerie (paramilitary police) headquarters and prisons throughout Cameroon are extremely harsh and amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. There is severe overcrowding and acute lack of sanitary facilities. Food and medical care are inadequate. Disease is rife and there is a high mortality among prisoners.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express/airmail letters in French, English or your own language:

- expressing concern about the arrest and detention of some 40 SDF members and supporters: 25 held in administrative detention in Buea, South-West Province, and another 15 arrested on 6 June 1997 in Yaoundé;
- urging that they be treated humanely while in detention, in accordance with international standards, and expressing particular concern about conditions of detention which Amnesty International considers amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment;
- urging their immediate and unconditional release, if, as it appears, they have been detained only because of their membership and support of the Social Democratic Front, and have neither used nor advocated violence.

APPEALS TO:

President

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

Fax: +237 221 699

Telegrams: President, Yaounde, Cameroon

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

Prime Minister

Mr Peter Mafany Musonge
Premier Ministre
Cabinet du Premier Ministre
Immeuble Etoile
1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Fax: +237 235 765

Telegrams: Premier Ministre, Yaounde, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre / Dear Prime Minister

Minister of Justice

M. Laurent Easo
Ministre de la Justice, Garde des Sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Yaounde, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Governor of South-West Province (for those detained in Buea)

Mr Peter Oben Ashu
Governor of South-West Province
Governor's Office
7000 Buea, South-West Province, Cameroon

Telegrams: Governor South West Province, Buea, Cameroon
Salutation: Monsieur le Gouverneur / Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

Dr Solomon Nfor Gwei
President, National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms
PO Box 20317
Yaoundé, Cameroon

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

and to diplomatic representatives of Cameroon accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 July 1997.