

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 17/24/97

22 August 1997

**Further information on UA 105/97 (AFR 17/05/97, 16 April 1997) and follow-ups (AFR 17/09/97, 14 May, AFR 17/10/97, 13 June, AFR 17/15/97, 10 July) - Torture and ill-treatment / Possible prisoners of conscience / Medical Concern / Death in custody**

**CAMEROON Reports of torture amid large scale arrests**

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Amnesty International remains concerned about the health and safety of almost 50 people who have been detained since late March 1997 after violent incidents occurred in North-West Province. Five of those arrested have died as a result of torture, ill-treatment and lack of medical care.

Eleven detainees, held incommunicado at the headquarters of the Gendarmerie Legion in Bamenda, North-West Province, were transferred to Nkondengui prison in the capital, Yaoundé, in late July 1997. They joined 36 others previously transferred from Bamenda to Yaoundé. They are: **John Geh Anye** and **Anoh Ndum Robinson**, both from Momo Division, **Geh Sama Atambun**, from Mezam Division, and **Lawrence Fai**, **Edwin Jumven**, **Thomas Kidze**, **Frederick Kiven**, **Iderisu Bika**, **A. Jumban Lukong**, **Muhamadou Nso Seka** and **Patrick Yimbu**, all from Bui Division.

The most recent death was that of **Ngwa Richard Formasoh**, aged 25, who died on 5 July in Nkondengui prison after suffering from severe diarrhoea for which he received no treatment. There is concern for the well-being of all those who remain at Nkondengui prison.

No charges have been brought against any of those, detained now for almost five months. Amnesty International acknowledges the government's responsibility to bring to justice those responsible for the attacks in North-West Province during which 10 people died. However, many of the two to three hundred people arrested appeared to have been detained only because of their association with the principal opposition political party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF). Others were associated with the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), an organization which advocates independence for Cameroon's two English-speaking provinces, North-West and South-West Provinces, and an affiliated organization, the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL). The government has claimed that a group supporting independence for these two provinces was responsible for the attacks.

The SDF accused the government of exploiting the situation of insecurity to intimidate members and supporters of opposition political parties and prevent political activity in the period preceding the parliamentary elections on 17 May.

The results of the elections, announced by the Supreme Court on 6 June, gave the ruling *Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounais* (RDPC), Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), 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. The elections in only seven constituencies were

annulled by the Supreme Court; candidates of the ruling CPDM gained the seats in re-run elections held on 3 August.

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

- repeating your request for immediate independent investigations into the deaths of those who have died in custody following their arrest in connection with the violent incidents in North-West Province in late March 1997, and also into all other allegations of torture and ill-treatment, in order to bring those responsible to justice;
- expressing concern about the health and safety of the 47 detainees who remain in the Central Prison, Nkondengui, in Yaoundé in connection with these incidents and urging that they be treated humanely in accordance with international standards, and in particular that they receive all necessary medical care as a matter of urgency, including admittance to hospital if necessary;
- expressing concern none of these people have been charged with any offence, almost five months after their arrest;
- acknowledging the government's responsibility to bring to justice those who have committed criminal acts, but requesting clarification of the reasons for the continued detention without charge or trial of those still held;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of anyone who is detained only because of their political opinions and activities, who has neither used nor advocated violence.

**APPEALS TO:**

President

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

**Telegrams: President, Yaounde, Cameroon**

**Faxes: +237 221 699**

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

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**

Deputy Prime Minister, responsible for the Interior

M. Gilbert Andzé Tsoungui  
Vice-Premier Ministre chargé de l'Administration territoriale  
Ministère de l'Administration territoriale  
1000 Yaoundé 4, Cameroon

**Telegrams: Vice-Premier Ministre Tsoungui, Yaoundé, Cameroon**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Vice-Premier Ministre / Dear Deputy Prime Minister**

**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 Messager*, 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 3 September 1997.