

UA 315/97

Ill-treatment / Fear for safety

3 October 1997

CHADSosthène Ngargoune, journalist
Dobian Assingar, human rights activist

On 25 September 1997, Sosthène Ngargoune, president of the *Union des journalistes tchadiens*, Chadian Union of Journalists, was severely beaten by members of the Chadian security forces who he was interviewing. During the attack they threatened to kill him and Dobian Assingar, a prominent local human rights activist, accusing the two men of links with Laokein Bardé, the leader of the *Forces armées pour la République fédérale* (FARF), Armed Forces for the Federal Republic (see below). Amnesty International fears that Sosthène Ngargoune and Dobian Assingar are at risk of extrajudicial execution or other human rights violations.

According to information received by Amnesty International, Sosthène Ngargoune was assaulted at the police headquarters of Moundou, southern Chad, as he conducted an interview for an independent national newspaper, *N'Djaména Hebdo*, with former members of the FARF who have joined the army. A peace accord between the FARF and the government was signed in April 1997, which provided for, amongst other things, members of the FARF to be integrated into the Chadian National Army and for the FARF to become a political party.

The deputy commander of the regional gendarmerie unit, *adjoint au commandant de légion de la gendarmerie*, was present and did not take any action against the perpetrators to stop the attack. Sosthène Ngargoune's possessions, including his camera, tape recorder, notebook and other personal belongings were also confiscated.

Dobian Assingar, President of the *Ligue Tchadienne des Droits de l'Homme de la Fédération des Logones et du Tandjilé* (LTDH/FLT), Chadian Human Rights League of the Federation of the Logones and Tandjilé, along with other members of human rights organizations, played an active role in the negotiations which led to the peace agreement between the FARF and the government.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

President Idriss Déby has faced ongoing but sporadic armed insurgency in the east, north and south regions of Chad since he took power in 1990. While all parties to the conflict have committed human rights abuses against the civilian population, the main perpetrators have been the Chadian security forces. Members of the security forces taking part in counter-insurgency operations have committed scores of human rights violations against the civilian population.

Members of the free press and human rights organizations have often been attacked by the Chadian security forces in the past. In 1992, Joseph Behidi, president of the LTDH, was extrajudicially executed by members of the security forces.

Since then, many other human rights defenders who have spoken out about abuses by government forces or armed opposition groups have received death threats.

Human rights defenders have also been arrested and held for several days before being released without charge. In June 1995, members of the security forces ransacked the offices of the newspaper *N'Djaména Hebdo* and assaulted several employees; the director and the editor-in-chief were beaten with electric cables and sticks on the newspaper's premises, then taken away for "questioning" where they were beaten further. They were later released uncharged.

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

- seeking assurances that the government will take immediate steps to ensure the physical safety and security of Sosthène Ngargoune and Dobian Assingar;
- urging that the beating of Sosthène Ngargoune and the death threats against the two men be investigated, and that those responsible be brought to justice in accordance with international standards of fairness.
- expressing concern over the harassment and ill-treatment of human rights defenders and journalists in Chad and urging that these groups be guaranteed the rights to freedom of expression and association;
- calling on the Chadian authorities to take immediate practical steps to prevent further human rights violations by members of the armed forces.

APPEALS TO:

President

President Idriss Déby
Président de la République
Présidence de la République
BP 74, N'DJAMENA, Chad

Faxes: + 235 51 45 01/51 46 53

Telegrams: President Déby, N'Djaména, Chad

Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President

Minister of Defence and Reintegration

Monsieur Mahamat Nimir HAMAJTA
Ministre de la Défense nationale et de la Réinsertion
Ministère de la Défense nationale
N'DJAMENA, Chad

Telegrams: Ministre des Forces armées, N'Djaména, Chad

Salutation : Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Abdelkerim NADJO
Ministre de la Justice et Garde des sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
N'DJAMENA, Chad

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, N'Djaména, Chad

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Prefect of Moundou

Monsieur Ahmat Hassaballah Soubiane
Préfet de Moundou
Moundou
Logone occidentale, Chad

Telegrams: Prefet de Moundou, Logone occidentale, Chad

Salutation: Monsieur le Préfet

COPIES TO:

Chief of defence staff

Colonel Routouang Yoma GOLOM
Chef d'Etat-major Général
Armée nationale tchadienne
N'DJAMENA, Chad

Maître Paul Wadana, Procureur de la République,
Palais de Justice, Moundou, Chad

Dobian Assingar and Sosthène Ngargoune,
LTDH/FLT, BP 108 Moundou, Chad

Le Rédacteur en chef, N'Djaména Hebdo,
BP 760 N'DJAMENA, Chad

and to diplomatic representatives of Chad accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 November 1997.