

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal concern

5 March 1992

Côte d'Ivoire:

Adou Jean-François

Aka Kouassi

Akassi Thomas

Kalifa Touré, aged 33, an engineer, journalist and member of the Front Populaire ivoirien (FPI), the Ivorian Popular Front

Ouattara LANCINA

Teha EMMANUEL

and at least 109 others

The six people named above are among at least 115 people arrested on 18 February 1992 in the capital, Abidjan, in connection with demonstrations against the government. The demonstrations criticized the government's refusal to act on the findings of a Commission of Inquiry into an apparently punitive raid launched by the army on Abidjan University's Yopougon student residence on 17 May 1991, which followed confrontation between students and the security forces.

On 18 February 1992 a large-scale demonstration by opposition parties, trade unions and the Ligue ivoirienne des Droits de l'Homme (LIDHO), Ivorian League of Human Rights, demanded the release of student leaders arrested after a demonstration on 13 February 1992. Amnesty International has already appealed on behalf of others arrested in connection with this demonstration (see UA 60/92, AFR 31/01/92, 19 February 1992). The march started peacefully but later on there were violent attacks by some people on cars and other property. It has been reliably reported that demonstrators were tear-gassed and assaulted and that the security forces publicly beat some detainees on the soles of the feet before taking them away.

Among those arrested some are currently on trial, but 115 remain in custody since 18 February without any charges being brought against them. This prolonged period of detention without charge (*garde à vue*) contravenes Ivorian law, which stipulates that an initial period of 48 hours in custody of the security forces can only be prolonged for a further 48 hours on the decision of the State Prosecutor (Procureur de la République). The continuing detention of the 115 appears therefore to be illegal. Some were arrested during the demonstrations, but others, including Kalifa Touré were arrested at the headquarters of the opposition Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI) in Koumassi, an area of the capital, Abidjan. They are held at Yopougon prison.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The findings of the Commission of Inquiry into the incident at the university in May 1991 were presented on 29 January 1992. The Commission concluded that soldiers were guilty

of raping and beating students during the raid and identified the army Chief of Staff, General Robert Guei, as having sole responsibility for the decision to send troops onto the university campus. It recommended that he should be punished. However, President Houphouët-Boigny criticized the Commission's findings and refused to take any action against General Guei.

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RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- inquiring about the legal basis for detention of the six people named above and 109 other people arrested and held without charge at Yopougon prison;
- requesting an assurance that they are not being subjected to ill-treatment in custody;
- urging the authorities to allow them immediate access to legal counsel, to relatives and medical facilities;
- expressing concern that many detainees could be prisoners of conscience and urging the authorities that any prisoners held on account of their non-violent political activities should be released immediately and unconditionally;
- urging the government to release these prisoners if they are not to be charged promptly with recognizably criminal offences and given a fair and public trial within a reasonable time.

APPEALS TO

1) President:

Son Excellence

Monsieur le Président / Dear President

Felix Houphouët-Boigny

Président de la République

La Présidence

Boulevard Clozel, Abidjan

République de Côte d'Ivoire

Telegrams: President Houphouet-Boigny, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

Telexes: 23754 PRESID CI or 23169 PRELIT CI

2) Prime Minister:

M. Alassane Ouattara

Monsieur le Premier Ministre /

Premier Ministre

Dear Prime Minister

Le Primature

Abidjan

République de Côte D'Ivoire

Telegrams: Premier Ministre, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

3) Minister of Justice:

Mme Jacqueline Lohoues-Oble

Madame le Ministre / Dear Minister

Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

Boulevard Angoulvant

BP V107, Abidjan

République de Côte d'Ivoire

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

Telexes: 23752 MINAFET CI (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

4) Minister of Interieur:

M. Emile-Constant Bombet

Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Ministre de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité

Ministère de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité

Boulevard Angoulvant

Abidjan

République de Côte d'Ivoire

Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO: diplomatic representatives of Côte d'Ivoire in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 April 1992.