

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal Concern/Health concern

22 June 1993

SIERRA LEONE: 264 Political detainees at the Central Prison, Pademba Road, Freetown, (commonly referred to as Pademba Road Prison) including:

Bockarie Babay, farmer

Alhaja Kallon, school student, aged 14

Finda Mbriwa (female), housewife

Sahid Mohamed Sesay, student

Amnesty International is urgently appealing to the government of Sierra Leone to review the cases of several hundred political detainees held virtually in secret at the Pademba Road Prison in the capital, Freetown. Most have been held for several months, some for as long as two years and none has been charged or tried for any offence. Deaths from disease and malnutrition frequently occur in the prison; at least seven prisoners are reported to have died in the first week of May 1993. Amnesty International is also calling on the government to urgently improve conditions at the prison in order to prevent further deaths.

Amnesty International representatives visited Pademba Road Prison in early May 1993 where they saw 264 political detainees, including nine women. The youngest was a 14-year-old boy. About 20 detainees have been held since 1991, when they were captured following an invasion by rebel forces from neighbouring Liberia. They originally numbered some 570; most of the others died from torture, starvation or medical neglect in 1991 and 1992. Others were detained after the government of Captain Valentine E.M. Strasser came to power following a coup in April 1992. Although apparently held as suspected rebels or opponents of the new government, there has been no proper investigation into their cases. In most cases, there appears to be no legal basis for the detentions; in others, detention orders have been issued under emergency legislation introduced in May 1992 which allows for administrative detention without charge or trial and which specifically prevents challenges against such detentions in the courts.

Political detainees at Pademba Road Prison are completely cut off from the outside world; it appears that often their families do not know if or where they are detained.

Amnesty International has sent a list of the 264 cases to the government, urging an immediate review of each case to establish why each detainee is being held and the release of prisoners of conscience and others who have not been accused of a criminal offence.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

- expressing concern that several hundred political detainees are being held incommunicado and without charge or trial at Pademba Road Prison;

- urging an immediate review of all cases of detainees held without charge or trial for political reasons and the release of prisoners of conscience and others who have not been accused of a criminal offence; those who are to be charged should be promptly and fairly tried;

- urging an end to arbitrary detention without recourse to the courts;

- urging an end to incommunicado detention in Pademba Road Prison; detainees should be allowed prompt and regular access to their lawyers and families;

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- calling for urgent improvements to conditions at Pademba Road Prison in order to prevent further deaths from malnutrition and disease.

APPEALS TO

1) Captain Valentine E.M. Strasser
Chairman
Supreme Council of State
National Provisional Ruling Council
State House
Independence Avenue
Freetown, Sierra Leone

Salutation: Dear Captain Strasser

Telegrams: Captain Strasser, NPRC, Freetown, Sierra Leone
Telexes: 3230

2) Captain Solomon A.J. Musa
Deputy Chairman, Supreme Council of State
National Provisional Ruling Council
State House
Independence Avenue
Freetown, Sierra Leone

Salutation: Dear Captain Musa

Telegrams: Captain Musa, NPRC, Freetown, Sierra Leone
Telexes: 3230

3) Lieutenant Karefa Kargbo
Secretary General
National Provisional Ruling Council
State House
Independence Avenue
Freetown, Sierra Leone

**Salutation: Dear Lieutenant
Kargbo**

Telegrams: Lieutenant Karefa Kargbo, NPRC, Freetown, Sierra Leone
Telexes: 3230

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Captain Julius Maada Bio
Liaison Officer for Finance, Foreign
Affairs and Information
Supreme Council of State
National Provisional Ruling Council

State House
Independence Avenue
Freetown, Sierra Leone

Human rights organization:
Society for the Preservation
of Human Rights in Sierra Leone
PMB 915
Freetown
Sierra Leone
Newspapers:

New Citizen

5 Hannah Benka-Coker Street
Brookfields, Freetown, Sierra Leone

Daily Mail

PO Box 53, Freetown
Sierra Leone

and to diplomatic representatives of Sierra Leone accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 August 1993.