

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AFR 60/01/91
Distr: UA/SC

22 April 1991

Further information on UA 04/90 (AFR 60/01/90, 8 January 1990), and follow-ups AFR 60/03/90, (6 February 1990), AFR 60/04/90, (21 March 1990), and AFR 60/06/90, (18 June 1990) - Fear of executions and torture/Legal Concern

BURKINA FASO: Arrests of 31 people in December 1989, including:

Moumouni TRAORE
Raymond Train PODA
Tibo OUEDRAOGO

On 8 April 1991 the Burkinabè Minister of Justice, Monsieur Antoine Komi Sambo, announced that 19 people detained in connection with an alleged conspiracy against the government in December 1989 had been released as a result of a presidential amnesty.

Thirty-one people had been arrested in December 1989, but the government subsequently announced that four had escaped. However, Amnesty International established that one of those said to have escaped, university teacher Guillaume Sessouma, died as a result of torture in early January 1990. The authorities have still not officially acknowledged his death and no investigation is known to have taken place. (See UA 390/90, AFR 60/08/90 (27 September 1990).)

Judicial investigations began into the cases of the 27 remaining in detention in March 1990 and although charges relating to offences against the security of the state had been brought against some of the detainees by the end of 1990, none was brought to trial. Eight had been released uncharged by September 1990 and those remaining in detention were freed in the amnesty on 8 April 1991.

Amnesty International was concerned that some of those detained might be prisoners of conscience. All had been closely associated with former President Thomas Sankara who was killed in the coup in October 1987 which brought President Blaise Compaoré to power. No charges were brought against two of those detained, Raymond Train Poda, a former minister of justice, and Moumouni Traoré, an economist, both of whom were, like Guillaume Sessouma, members of the *Union de lutte communiste - reconstruite* (ULC-R), Union of Communist Struggle - Reconstructed, a political group which had supported the Sankara government.

Several of the detainees arrested in December 1989 were reported to have been tortured or ill-treated. Tibo Ouedraogo, an army officer, was said to have been kept handcuffed throughout his detention. Following reports of their torture, the government sought to allay fears for their safety: in January 1990, representatives of a local human rights organization were invited to see them and in November they were presented to the local press. They were not allowed visits from their families until August 1990.

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FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Further letters, in French if possible, may be sent:

- welcoming the presidential amnesty for those prisoners arrested in December 1989 who remained in detention;
- expressing concern, nevertheless, that in the absence of any trial it remains unclear that the authorities were in possession of sufficient evidence to justify imprisoning suspects for more than 15 months in pre-trial detention;
- calling on the authorities to review detention procedures to ensure that in the future no-one may be imprisoned solely on account of his or her non-violent political opinions.

APPEALS TO:

Son Excellence Capitaine Blaise Compaoré
Président du Front Populaire
Chef de l'Etat et Chef du Gouvernement
Présidence du Faso
BP 7031
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

Monsieur le Capitaine Gilbert Diendéré
Secrétaire chargé de la Défense et de la sécurité
Comité exécutif du Front populaire
Secrétariat général du gouvernement
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

Monsieur André Roch Kaboré
Ministre d'Etat
Secrétariat général du gouvernement
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

COPIES TO:

Monsieur Alidou Ouedraogo
Président
Mouvement burkinabè des droits de
l'homme et des peuples (MBDHP)
01 BP 2055
Ouagadougou 01
Burkina Faso

Monsieur Pierre Waonga
Rédacteur
Sidwaya
Ouagadougou
Burkina Faso

and to diplomatic representatives of Burkina Faso in your country.

Please check with the International Secretariat if sending appeals after 3 June 1991.