

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 62/09/96

EXTRA 117/96 Fear of torture / Possible prisoner of conscience 26 July 1996

ZAIREDidi Mwati Bulambo, human rights activist

Didi Mwati Bulambo was arrested on 25 July 1996 by gendarmes at Kamitunga in South Kivu's Mwenga district (zone), where he is reportedly still held. Soon after his arrest, cries recognized as his, and sounds consistent with whipping, were heard coming from the prison, which is said to be overcrowded with no toilet facilities or natural light. Amnesty International fears for his safety and is concerned that he appears to be a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Didi Mwati Bulambo is a coordinator of the *Collectif d'action pour le développement des droits de l'homme* (CADDHOM), Collective for Action for the Development of Human Rights, in eastern Zaire's South Kivu region. He was arrested after the Regional Procurator General in Bukavu, South Kivu's capital, allowed the Procuracy in Kamitunga to issue a summons for Didi Mwati Bulambo. The summons was in connection with an article which appeared in May 1996 in CADDHOM's newsletter, *Mwangaza*, criticizing alleged corruption among Kamitunga Procuracy officials. The Procurator of Kamitunga had accused Didi Mwati Bulambo of insulting the judiciary in contravention of Zairean Penal Code, an offence punishable by up to six months' imprisonment.

CADDHOM is a youth human rights group formed in 1991 in Kamitunga, a gold mining centre. In the past year, it has mounted a campaign against arbitrary arrests in Mwenga district and corruption in the judiciary. Several other members of CADDHOM are reported to have received summons for possessing or distributing copies of *Mwangaza*. It is unclear whether any have been arrested.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Arbitrary arrests, torture and summary executions have escalated in eastern Zaire since the Zairean Government sent large numbers of troops to the region following the arrival there of hundreds of thousands of refugees from neighbouring Rwanda and Burundi, particularly in 1994. The massive deployment of ill-disciplined and poorly or even unpaid troops, particularly from the Zairean capital, Kinshasa, has aggravated human rights violations in the region.

Numerous Zairean development and human rights organizations have been set up in eastern Zaire over the last decade. These organizations and opposition political parties have been very critical of human rights violations, corruption by the government and its failure to deliver services. As a result, members of the security forces, government and judicial officials have colluded to subject human rights and political activists to threats of violence, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions and torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest of Didi Mwati Bulambo on 25 July 1996, apparently because his organization's newsletter published an article on alleged corruption in the judiciary;
- expressing concern that Didi Mwati Bulambo has reportedly been beaten in custody, and seeking assurances that he is not being subjected to torture or ill-treatment;

- stating that he appears to be a prisoner of conscience held because he exercised his right to freedom of expression, and urging that he be released immediately and unconditionally unless promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial in accordance with international standards of fairness.

APPEALS TO:

President

Son Excellence Maréchal MOBUTU Sese Seko
de la République
Présidence de la République
Mont Ngaliema
Kinshasa, ZAIRE

Président

Telegrams: President MOBUTU, Kinshasa, ZAIRE

Telexes: 21368

Salutation: Monsieur le Président

South-Kivu Governor

Pasteur KYEMBWA Walumona
Gouverneur
Région du Sud-Kivu
Hôtel de ville
Bukavu

République du Zaïre

Telegrams: Gouverneur Kyembwa, Bukavu, Zaire

Salutation: Monsieur le Gouverneur

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Joseph Nsinga Udju
Ministre de la Justice et Garde des sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
BP 3137
Kinshasa- Gombe, ZAIRE

Telegrams: Ministre Nsinga, Kinshasa, Zaire

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre

COPIES TO:

Prime Minister

Monsieur Léon KENGO Wa Dondo
Premier Ministre
Hôtel du Conseil Exécutif
Avenue des 3Z
Kinshasa - Gombe, ZAIRE

Armed Forces Chief of Staff

Grand amiral ELUKI Monga
Chef d'Etat-major général des
Forces armées zairoises (FAZ)
Ministère de la Défense nationale
Kinshasa-Ngaliema
République du Zaïre

and to diplomatic representatives of Zaire accredited to your country (or the Zairian Ambassador in Belgium: 30 Rue Marie de Bourgogne, 1040 Brussels, Belgium, **Fax: +32 2 514 0403**).

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 August 1996.