UA 53/99   **Fear of Torture/medical** concern   23 March 1999

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO Albert Gilbert Bosange Yema, journalist
Théodore Bosange, his son

Albert Gilbert Bosange Yema, editor of the newspaper *L'alarme* (Alarm) has been in hiding since 12 March 1999, fearing arrest and torture by the *Groupe speciale de sécurité présidentiel* (GSSP), Special Presidential Security Group.

The GSSP are reportedly seeking him in connection with an article published in *L'Alarme* on 11 March 1999, which rejected the government's claim that it had recaptured the town of Bolobo in Bandundu province from rebel forces.

On 12 March, having failed to find Albert Gilbert Bosange Yema, the GSSP arrested his wife, five of his children and two of his colleagues, and held them for 24 hours in an unofficial detention centre known as the ''GLM building''. There, his son, Théodore Bosange, was whipped several times with *cordelettes* (military belts). Since their release, several members of the family have also gone into hiding after they were threatened by members of the GSSP.

On 2 February 1999, Albert Gilbert Bosange Yema completed a 12 month prison sentence imposed on him by the State Security Court, the court found him guilty of ''endangering the security of the state'', for publishing an article in *L'Alarme* entitled ''Now or never, stop the dictatorship of President Kabila''. He spent the last six months of his sentence in hospital, as he suffers from diabetes and rheumatism. Amnesty International considered him a prisoner of conscience.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Renewed armed conflict broke out in the DRC in August 1998 when an army mutiny in the east of the country led to the creation of the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie*, (RCD), Congolese Rally for Democracy. The RCD, which is backed by the armies of Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, now effectively controls a large swathe of territory in eastern DRC.

The DRC government, supported by Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and Chad, is currently engaged in a massive counter-offensive operation, but has been unable to recapture territory. A state of heightened paranoia has been evident in the capital for several months. Persecution of those suspected of collaborating with the enemy, or criticising the government, has resulted in severe human rights violations including extrajudicial executions, torture, arbitrary arrest, unfair trial and the death penalty.

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

- Expressing concern at reports that Albert Gilbert Bosange Yema is threatened with arrest and stated that if detained for exercising his right to freedom of expression, he would be a prisoner of conscience, and therefore the authorities should prevent his arrest;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee the safety of Albert Gilbert Bosange Yema, his family and colleagues, and ensure that their basic rights and personal security are not violated;
- calling for an investigation into the allegations that Théodore Bosange was tortured on 12 March, and for those found responsible to be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

<u>President</u>
Président Laurent-Désiré KABILA
Président de la République, Présidence de la République
Kinshasa-Ngaliema
Democratic Republic of Congo
Telegrams: President, Kinshasa, DR Congo
Faxes: + 243 88 02120
email: UPP@ic.cd
Salutation:Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President Kabila

<u>Minister</u> <u>of</u> <u>Justice</u>
Monsieur Mwenze KONGOLO
Ministre de la justice
Ministère de la justice
BP 3137 Kinshasa-Gombe
Democratic Republic of Congo

COPIES TO:

Minister of Information
M. Didier MUMENGI
Ministre de l'Information et du Tourisme
Ministère de l'information
Kinshasa-Gombe
Democratic Republic of Congo
e-mail: mininfordc@ic.cd

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of the Democratic Republic of Congo
accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 May 1999.