

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Torture/Legal Concern

8 January 1992

CAMEROON Jean-Michel NINTCHEU, publisher and opposition leader,
Emmanuel WATO, computer technician and opposition leader,
and five others

Two opposition leaders are reported to have been tortured and ill-treated by police in Cameroon and Amnesty International is seriously concerned about their safety. Amnesty International believes that they are prisoners of conscience and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

Jean-Michel Nintcheu is a publisher, President of the opposition party, Rassemblement pour la patrie (RAP), and member of the Comité d'action populaire pour la liberté et la démocratie (CAP Liberté), a pro-democracy human rights organization which is banned in Cameroon. He was arrested on 3 January 1992 at his printing works in Douala, together with five of his employees, whose names are not known. According to reports, the police ransacked the office, destroying printing equipment and taking away leaflets and other printed materials.

Emmanuel WATO, a computer technician and regional coordinator of CAP Liberté in Douala, was also arrested on 3 January 1992 at his office in Douala.

Both are alleged to have been severely beaten whilst held in custody at police headquarters in Bonanjo, Douala. Their lawyer has reportedly been denied access to them and it is alleged that Jean-Michel Nintcheu has also been denied hospital treatment recommended by a doctor.

Jean-Michel Nintcheu is reported to be in very poor health, suffering from swollen limbs and eyes and unable to walk, having been beaten on the soles of his feet. Emmanuel Wato is also reported to have suffered injuries as a result of being beaten.

None of the detainees has been charged with any offence. Jean-Michel Nintcheu was released, briefly, on 4 January 1992 but re-arrested and again beaten when he returned to retrieve his car from police headquarters. He is thought to be currently detained at the Commissariat du premier arrondissement (First district police station) in Douala, where he is reported to have gone on hunger-strike in protest against ill-treatment. The police have reportedly refused to allow him hospital treatment despite the recommendation of a doctor who was able to visit him. No medical care is known to have been provided by the authorities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Although legislation in December 1990 has allowed the registration of over 30 new political parties in Cameroon, opposition supporters have continued to be harassed by the security police. In 1991 a pattern emerged involving the short-term detention and torture of leaders of newly-formed opposition parties.

CAP Liberté, founded by former political prisoner Djeukam Tchameni, was one of several organizations banned by the government in July 1991 for allegedly threatening public order and the security of the state. In August 1991 the offices of Djeukam Tchameni's computer company in Douala, also the headquarters of CAP Liberté, were ransacked by government forces.

Djeukam Tchameni left the country shortly afterwards following an apparent assassination attempt.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern that publisher Jean-Michel Nintcheu, together with five of his employees, and computer technician Emmanuel Wato were arrested in Douala on 3 January 1992;

Page 2 of UA 08/92

- expressing concern also at reports that Jean-Michel Nintcheu and Emmanuel Wato have been beaten or tortured in police custody, that they have not been given medical care and that Jean-Michel Nintcheu has been denied hospital treatment recommended by a doctor;

- appealing for them to be humanely treated while in detention and given access to necessary medical treatment;

- expressing concern at reports that the lawyer acting on behalf of Jean-Michel Nintcheu and Emmanuel Wato has been denied access to his clients and requesting that they be given full and immediate access to their legal representative;

- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Jean-Michel Nintcheu, his five employees and Emmanuel Wato if, as it appears, they have been detained solely because of their non-violent opposition to the government.

APPEALS TO:

1) President

Son Excellence

Monsieur Paul Biya

Président de la République

Palais de la Présidence

1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telexes: 8207 PRESID KN; 8230 PRESID2 KN or
8595 PRESID B KN

Telegrams: President Biya, Yaounde, Cameroon

Faxes: + 237 22 08 70

Monsieur le Président de la République /

Dear President

2) Prime Minister:

M. Sadou Hayatou

Premier Ministre

Palais de la Présidence

1000 Yaoundé

Cameroon

Telegrams: Premier Ministre Hayatou, Yaounde, Cameroon

Monsieur le Premier Ministre /

Dear Prime Minister

3) Minister of Internal Affairs:

Monsieur Gilbert Andzé Tsoungui

Ministre de l'Administration territoriale

Ministère de l'Administration territoriale

1000 Yaoundé 4, Cameroon

Telegrams: Ministre Tsoungui, Yaounde, Cameroon

Telexes: 8503 MINAT KN; 8268 MINAT KN

Monsieur le Ministre /

Dear Minister

4) Director of National Security:

Monsieur Jean Fochivé

Monsieur le Directeur /

Directeur de la Sûreté nationale
Centre national d'études et de recherches
Yaoundé, Cameroon

Dear Director

Telegrams: Directeur Surete nationale Fochive, Yaounde, Cameroon

Telexes: 8383 CNER KN

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs:

M. Jacques-Roger Booh Booh
Ministre des Affaires étrangères
Ministère des Affaires étrangères
1000 Yaoundé 4, Cameroon

and the following newspapers:

Le Messenger, BP 5925, Douala, Cameroon
La Gazette, BP 5485, Douala, Cameroon
Le Mont Cameroun, BP 3979, Douala, Cameroon
Cameroon Tribune, BP 1218, Yaoundé, Cameroon

and to diplomatic representatives of Cameroon in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 19 February 1992.