

17 March 1997

Further information (8) on UA 250/96 (AFR 17/06/96, 31 October 1996) and follow-ups AFR 17/08/96, 12 November, AFR 17/09/96, 15 November, AFR 17/11/96, 11 December, AFR 17/12/96, 13 December, AFR 17/13/96, 18 December, AFR 17/01/97 14 January, AFR 17/02/97, 23 January - Prisoner of conscience / Fear of further prisoners of conscience

CAMEROONEyoun Nangué

Eyoun Nangué, a journalist working for the independent newspaper *Le Messenger* and its satirical supplement, *Le Messenger Popoli*, is still imprisoned at the Central Prison, New-Bell, in Douala. He had been arrested on 22 January 1997, after having been sentenced in early October 1996 by the Court of Appeal in Douala to a one-year prison sentence and a fine of 300,000 CFA francs.

Both Eyoun Nangué and the chief editor of *Le Messenger*, Pius Njawe, were originally sentenced only to fines on charges relating to an article which appeared in *Le Messenger Popoli* in December 1995. However, the Court of Appeal increased their sentences to fines and prison terms. They were convicted of insulting the President of the Republic and members of the National Assembly ("*outrage par injure fait au Président de la République ainsi qu'aux membres de l'Assemblée nationale*"). Both journalists appealed against their conviction and sentence to the Supreme Court.

Pius Njawe was arrested on 29 October 1996 and imprisoned in New Bell Prison. On 15 November, he was released conditionally (*liberté provisoire*), following a Supreme Court ruling the previous day.

Eyoun Nangué's appeal has not yet been heard by the Supreme Court. His brother, Eyoun Ndoumbé, a journalist working for the government-owned *Cameroon Tribune* newspaper, was reported to have been suspended from his post after appealing for his brother's release.

Freedom of expression is increasingly under attack in Cameroon and repression of the press appears likely to intensify as legislative and presidential elections approach. Legislative elections scheduled for early March 1997 have been postponed; a new date has not yet been set. Presidential elections are scheduled for October 1997. In addition to Pius Njawe and Eyoun Nangué, some seven other journalists were convicted of criminal offences and sentenced to prison terms during 1996. Others were arrested and detained for short periods before being released without charge. Amnesty International is concerned that the legal system is being used to prosecute journalists solely because of their opposition to the government and for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send one more round of appeals in French, English or your own language:

- expressing concern about the continuing imprisonment of Eyoun Nangué;
- urging his immediate and unconditional release if, as it appears, he has been detained solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- adding concern that some nine journalists were sentenced to prison terms during 1996 and several others detained without charge;
- reminding the government of Cameroon of its obligations to guarantee the right to freedom of expression under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which it ratified in 1984.

APPEALS TO:

President

Son Excellence M. Paul Biya
Président de la République
Palais de l'Unité
1000 Yaoundé, République du Cameroun

Fax: +237 221 699

Telegrams: President, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President Biya

Prime Minister

Mr Peter Mafany Musonge
Premier Ministre
Cabinet du Premier Ministre
Immeuble Étoile

1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Fax: +237 235 765

Telegrams: Premier Ministre, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre / Dear Prime Minister

Minister of Justice

M. Laurent Ezzo
Ministre de la Justice, Garde des Sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
1000 Yaoundé, République du Cameroun

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of State for Communication

M. Augustin Kontchou Kouomegni
Ministre d'Etat chargé de la Communication,
Ministère de la Communication
BP 1588, Yaoundé, République du Cameroun

Telegrams: Ministre Communication, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

- *Le Messenger*, BP 5925, 11 Boulevard de la Liberté, Douala, République du Cameroun
- *Cameroon Post*, BP 1981, Yaoundé, République du Cameroun
- *The Herald*, BP 3659 Messa, Yaoundé, République du Cameroun
- *La Nouvelle Expression*, BP 15333, 12 rue Prince de Galles, Douala, République du Cameroun

and to diplomatic representatives of Cameroon accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Please check with the International Secretariat or your section office is sending appeals after 28 April 1997.