

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 77/94 Extrajudicial executions

25 February 1994

CAMEROON: More than 50 Shua Arab villagers, including women and children

More than 50 unarmed civilians - men, women and children - were victims of reprisal killings by Cameroonian soldiers in the far north of Cameroon on 17 February 1994. Almost 100 others were wounded. Amnesty International condemns the killings and is calling for urgent measures to be taken to prevent further killings and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

The massacre occurred in the village of Karena, whose inhabitants are Shua Arabs (*Arabes Choa*) and which borders Lake Chad, in the District of Hillé-Alifa, Department of Logone and Shari (*Département du Logone et Chari*), in Far-North Province (*Province de l'Extrême-Nord*). The day before, on 16 February, the village chief, known as the *blama*, and a soldier had been killed in an incident involving armed bandits (*coupeurs de route*). The attack on the village occurred during a funeral ceremony for the *blama*, which was also attended by neighbouring villagers as well as an army commander and a local government official (*sous-préfet*). Soldiers of the 31st Battalion are reported to have surrounded the village and then fired indiscriminately at the villagers and set fire to houses. At least 55 people died, including nine women and 35 children; the youngest victim was a baby of seven weeks. Many of the victims were burnt to death in their homes. More than 90 others were wounded and taken to hospital. In addition to homes, a mosque, livestock and food supplies were destroyed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This atrocity follows only weeks after reports of the arrests, torture and killings of Shua Arabs in other areas of the Department of Logone and Shari.

After nine soldiers were killed in an ambush in Logone Birni on 18 January 1994, several Shua Arab traditional chiefs and other Shua Arabs suspected of complicity in the ambush were arrested. Some were apparently denounced by members of the Kotoko ethnic group which is involved in a conflict with the Shua Arabs. One of those arrested was reported to have died as a result of torture. In a separate incident, several Shua Arabs were arrested by the security forces at Afadé and then transferred to Kousséri and Waza. One was summarily shot; two others died following torture. (see UA 52/94, AFR 17/03/94, 15 February 1994.)

There has been a long-running conflict between Shua Arabs and the Kotoko ethnic group which has claimed hundreds of lives in recent years. The army has been deployed in the far north of Cameroon in order to curb intercommunal violence and to control attacks by armed bandits. However, Kotoko and Shua Arabs have each blamed the other for these attacks and security forces appear to have made indiscriminate arrests. Shua Arabs have claimed that the army is biased against them. During June 1993 the security forces were reported to have attacked several Shua Arab villages, rounding up and beating the inhabitants, after the Kotoko accused Shua Arabs of being responsible for attacks by armed bandits. At least seven Shua Arabs were reported to have been extrajudicially executed and another died as a result of torture. Sixty-two others were reported to have been arrested and held in Makari before being transferred to Kousséri. They were subsequently released. A peace agreement signed by leaders of the two communities in September 1993 specified that members of the security forces responsible for maintaining order in the Department of Logone and Shari should be from other parts of the country. Despite the peace agreement, fighting between the two groups has continued, resulting in further

deaths.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in French, English or in your own language:

- condemning the deliberate and arbitrary killing by soldiers of the 31st Battalion of more than 50 unarmed civilians at the village of Karena, Department of Logone and Shari, and the wounding of almost 100 others;
- urging an immediate public inquiry into these killings by a body which is recognized as independent of those allegedly responsible and which has the necessary powers and resources to carry out the investigation, and that its findings and recommendations be made public;
- calling for the commander and members of the unit responsible for the killings to be suspended from duty pending the outcome of the inquiry;
- urging that those responsible for these unlawful killings be brought to justice;
- urging that immediate measures be taken to end deliberate and arbitrary killings by the security forces; those in charge of security forces should be instructed to ensure that those under their command do not commit extrajudicial executions.

APPEALS TO

1) President:

Son Excellence Monsieur Paul Biya
Président de la République
Palais de l'Unité
Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telegrams: President Biya, Yaounde, Cameroon

Faxes: + 237 221699

Telexes: 8207 PRESID KN (Secretariat général)

8595 PRESID B KN (Cabinet civil)

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République/Dear President

2) Minister of Internal Affairs:

M. Gilbert Andzé Tsoungui
Vice-Premier Ministre chargé de l'Administration territoriale
Ministère de l'Administration territoriale
1000 Yaoundé 4, Cameroon

Telegrams: Ministre de l'Administration territoriale Tsoungui, Yaounde, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister

3) Minister Delegate at the Presidency in charge of Defence:

M. Edouard Akame Mfoumou
Ministre délégué à la Présidence chargé de la Défense
Palais de la Présidence
1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telegrams: Ministre délégué Defense, Présidence, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Faxes: + 237 221699

Telexes: 8207 PRESID KN (Secretariat général)

8595 PRESID B KN (Cabinet civil)

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre délégué, Dear Minister Delegate

4) Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces:

M. le Général de division
Pierre Semengué
Chef d'Etat-major des Armées

Ministère de la Défense
Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telegrams: Chef d'Etat-major Semengué, Ministère Défense, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telexes: 8261 MINFA KN

Salutation: Monsier le Général/Dear General Semengué

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Governor of Far-North Province:

Monsieur Seidou Mouchipou
Gouverneur de la Province de l'Extrême-Nord
Palais de Gouvernance
43000 Maroua, Cameroon

Commander of 3rd Military Region:

Brigadier General Jean-René Youmba
Commander of 3rd Military Region
Military Headquarters
43000 Maroua, Cameroon

Human Rights Organization

Ligue camerounaise des droits de la personne
BP 13580, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Cameroon Post, BP 1981, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Peuple d'Afrique, BP 1287, Yaoundé, Cameroon

La Gazette, BP 5485, Douala, Cameroon

Dikalo, BP 12656, Douala, Cameroon

and to diplomatic representatives of Cameroon accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 April 1994.