

UA 128/99

Fea.

**CAMEROON** Abdoulaye Math, President of the *Mouvement pour la défense des droits de l'homme et des libertés*, Movement for the Defence of Human Rights and Liberties (MDDHL), a non-governmental human rights organization,  
Semdi Soulay, his assistant.

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of two human rights defenders, Abdoulaye Math and Semdi Soulay, who are reportedly being sought by the security forces in Cameroon.

On the evening of 28 May 1999, members of the so-called *brigade anti-gang*, a joint 'anti-robbery' unit of the army and gendarmerie, came to the homes of Abdoulaye Math and Semdi Soulay in Maroua in the Far-North Province of Cameroon. Both men were away from their homes at the time. Abdoulaye Math's house was reportedly surrounded by some 18 armed officers who pointed their guns at a member of his family. On the following two nights, the security forces again surrounded his house.

The reasons for this action by the security forces are not clear but are believed to be connected to Abdoulaye Math and Semdi Soulay's work with the *Mouvement pour la défense des droits de l'homme et des libertés* (MDDHL), Movement for the Defence of Human Rights and Liberties. The MDDHL is one of the few organizations investigating human rights violations committed by the *brigade anti-gang*, with a particular focus on reports of extrajudicial executions in northern Cameroon.

There are also reports that Abdoulaye Math and Semdi Soulay are being sought by the security forces in connection with meetings they had with the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Torture in May 1999, during a fact-finding mission in Cameroon.

Another human rights defender is feared to have been killed for documenting extrajudicial executions. In October 1998 Alioum Aminou, a photographer, was arrested by the security forces in Maroua and has not been seen since. In June 1998 he had been detained for several days after photographing the body of customs officer Fabrice Habib, who was reportedly extrajudicially executed by the security forces at Motouroua on 15 June 1998.

Members of the *brigade anti-gang* searched Abdoulaye Math's house twice in December 1998, again in his absence. In early May 1999, members of the *brigade anti-gang* were reported to have threatened MDDHL members attempting to investigate possible extrajudicial executions.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Scores of criminal suspects have reportedly been extrajudicially executed in North and Far-North Provinces since March 1998, when a special unit was deployed to combat armed robbery in the region. In many cases those accused of armed robbery have reportedly been taken from their homes and shot, and their bodies later abandoned. In some cases there appeared to be no evidence that the victims had been involved in any criminal offence.

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

- expressing concern at reports that the houses of Abdoulaye Math, President of the *Mouvement pour la défense des droits de l'homme et des libertés* (MDDHL) and his assistant Semdi Soulay were surrounded by heavily armed members of the *brigade anti-gang* on 28 May 1999, and that a member of Abdoulaye Math's family was threatened with a gun;
- expressing concern that they might be targeted because of their human rights work;
- asking why the security forces did this;
- calling upon the authorities to ensure the safety of Abdoulaye Math and Semdi Soulay, and to ensure that human rights organizations are able to operate freely;
- expressing concern at reports that photographer Alioum Aminou was detained by the security forces in October 1998 and has not been seen since;
- calling upon the authorities to start a prompt, independent and impartial inquiry into the arrest and subsequent "disappearance" of Alioum Aminou; for the findings to be made public and for those found responsible to be brought to justice.

**APPEALS TO:**

M. Paul Biya  
Président de la République  
Palais de l'Unité  
1000 Yaoundé  
Cameroon

**Fax: + 237 20 33 06**

**e-mail: celcom@camnet.cm**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République**

M. Samson Ename Ename  
Ministre de l'Administration territoriale  
1000 Yaounde  
Cameroon

**Fax: + 237 203306**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre**

M. Laurent Ezzo  
Ministre de la Justice, Garde des Sceaux  
Ministère de la Justice  
1000 Yaoundé  
Cameroon

**Fax: 00 237 20 33 06**

**e-mail: celcom@camnet.cm**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre**

**COPIES TO:**

*Le Messenger* (newspaper), **fax: + 237 42 02 14**

*Cameroon Tribune* (newspaper), **fax + 237 304362**

*Ligue des droits et libertés* (human rights organization)

**Fax: + 237 44 22 53**

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 14 July 1999.