

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 17/11/98

14 August 1998

Further information on UA 113/98 (AFR 17/07/98, 15 April 1998) - Torture and ill-treatment / Health concern

CAMEROONEbenezer Akwanga, aged 26, student and President of the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL)

John Bah Atoh

Fon Peter Fonyam

Prisca Fonyam (f)

Bika Iderisu (please note new spelling of surname)

Grace Yaya Kwei (f)

Wilson Che Neba

Philip Tete, aged 59

Nseke Stanley Tete

Patrick Yimbu

new name: Lawrence Fai

and 48 others

Amnesty International remains seriously concerned about the health and safety of 59 prisoners who have spent up to 16 months in life-threatening conditions and who are reportedly being tortured and ill-treated. None of them has yet been charged or tried.

Ebenezer Akwanga is among those reported to be in a critical state of health as a result of torture. He is believed to have suffered paralysis of his lower limbs and impaired vision and was recently admitted to hospital. Philip Tete and Lawrence Lai are reportedly also seriously ill.

These prisoners were among around three hundred people arrested following attacks by armed groups on several towns in North-West Province in late March 1997, during which 10 people, including three gendarmes, were killed (see UA 105/97, AFR 17/05/97, 16 April 1997 and follow-ups). They were initially held in Bamenda in North-West Province but were subsequently transferred to Yaoundé.

Fifty-one of the prisoners are now in the Central Prison in Yaoundé, known as Nkondengui prison, and the other eight, including Ebenezer Akwanga, are held at the Principal Prison in Mfou, some 20 kilometres from Yaoundé. There is severe overcrowding, inadequate hygiene and sanitary facilities and seriously deficient diet and medical care.

Six of those detained in connection with the incidents in North-West Province in March 1997 have died either as a result of torture and ill-treatment or lack of medical care.

While no group claimed responsibility for the violence in North-West Province in March 1997, the authorities attributed the attacks to members of a group supporting independence for Cameroon's two English-speaking provinces, North-West and South-West Provinces. Some of those held are associated with the Southern Cameroons National Council, an organization which advocates independence for these provinces, and an affiliated organization, the SCYL.

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

- expressing serious concern about the health and safety of the 59 detainees, including Ebenezer Akwanga, who remain either at the Central Prison, Nkondengui, in Yaoundé or at the Principal Prison in Mfou;
- urging that they be treated humanely in accordance with international standards for the treatment of prisoners and, in particular, that they be protected from torture and ill-treatment and that they receive all necessary medical care as a matter of urgency, including admittance to hospital if necessary;
- acknowledging the government's responsibility to bring to justice those responsible for the attacks that occurred in North-West Province in March 1997 but expressing concern that these prisoners have been held for up to 16 months without charge or trial;
- reminding the government of its ratification in 1984 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, under which it is obliged to guarantee the fundamental rights also enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, notably Article 5: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment", and Article 10: "Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him."

APPEALS TO: (Please note that fax tones may be difficult to obtain.)

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

Telegrams: President, Yaounde, Cameroon

Faxes: + 237 221 699

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

Minister of Justice M. Laurent Easo, Ministre de la Justice, Garde des Sceaux,
Ministère de la Justice, 1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Yaounde, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of the Interior, M. Samson Ename Ename, Ministre de l'Administration
territoriale, Ministère de l'Administration territoriale
1000 Yaoundé 4, Cameroon

Telegrams: Ministre Administration territorial Ename, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES TO: Dr Solomon Nfor Gwei, President, National Commission on Human Rights
and Freedoms, PO Box 20317, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Cameroon Post, BP 1981, Yaoundé, Cameroon

The Herald, BP 3659 Messa, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Le Messenger, BP 5925, 11 Boulevard de la Liberté, Douala, Cameroon

L'Expression, BP 15333, 12 rue Prince de Galles, 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 2 October 1998.

***"No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment
or punishment"***

Article 5, Universal Declaration of Human Rights