

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 17/13/96

18 December 1996

Further information 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) - Prisoner of conscience / Fear of further POCs

CAMEROONEvariste Menouga)
Peter William Mandio) journalists
Daniel Atangana)

Peter William Mandio, a journalist on the newspaper *Le Nouvel Indépendant* and also director of *Le Front Indépendant* which was established when *Le Nouvel Indépendant* was temporarily suspended, was released without charge on 16 December 1996.

Peter William Mandio had been arrested on 4 December; he was the author of an article in *Le Nouvel Indépendant* on 3 October which criticized the Minister of Public Works. Evariste Menouga, a journalist on *Le Nouvel Indépendant*, was arrested on 27 October and remains in detention without charge. On 2 December, *Le Front Indépendant* published an article criticizing a commander of the presidential guard. The author of this article, Daniel Atangana, was arrested on 10 December and he also remains in detention without charge.

The detention of these journalists exceeds the 72 hours *garde à vue* allowed by law, that is, the period after which a detainee must be brought before a judicial authority to be charged or released.

Restrictions on freedom of expression have intensified in Cameroon during 1996. At least seven journalists have been sentenced to prison terms and several others have been arrested and detained without charge. Newspapers have been suspended. In some cases there have been serious irregularities in judicial procedures. Prosecutions against journalists appear to be attempts to inhibit criticism of prominent government members, those closely associated with them, or government policies.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please welcome the release of Peter William Mandio, expressing concern that he was detained beyond the 72 hours *garde à vue* allowed by law, but continue action on behalf of Evariste Menouga and Daniel Atangana as recommended in the previous updates (AFR 17/11/96, 11 December and AFR 17/12/96, 13 December). Action end date: 3 February 1997.