

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of torture/legal concern

30 October 1992

CAMEROON: John Fru Ndi, Chairman of the Social Democratic Front (SDF)
and over 120 SDF supporters

and at least 200 others arrested in Bamenda including:

Ngalla Nfor, SDF official

Peter Ngufor, businessman

Francis Sama, lawyer

Ophelia R. Sendze (female), lawyer

Justice Nyo Wakai, a former President of the Supreme Court

The leader and hundreds of supporters of the opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), have been detained or restricted without charge or trial in mass arrests following the imposition of a state of emergency in the North-West Province in Cameroon. Opposition supporters have also been detained in Douala, Cameroon's economic capital. Some of those detained were beaten at the time of their arrest and it is feared that they might be tortured in detention. Amnesty International considers that those detained or restricted are probably prisoners of conscience who have not used or advocated violence but who have been detained because of their non-violent criticism of the government.

Over 120 SDF supporters are being restricted and effectively detained at the house and compound of John Fru Ndi, Chairman of the SDF, in Bamenda, capital of the North-West Province. His house was surrounded by 200 gendarmes and police officers at 2 am on 25 October 1992. Conditions are poor; there is inadequate shelter from the rain and sufficient warm clothing. Until today, 30 October, food was not allowed to be taken in and all medical care denied; as a result, over 20 of those restricted have become ill. The authorities say that they are providing protective custody for John Fru Ndi and that weapons have been found at his house; this is denied by his supporters who say no search has been made.

About 50 opposition supporters were detained for 24 hours following a demonstration at a sports stadium in Douala on 26 October 1992. Many were members of opposition parties which had supported the candidacy of SDF leader John Fru Ndi in the October presidential elections. Some were reported to have been severely beaten, including leading SDF member Moukouri Manga Bell, who required hospital treatment following his release. Following the imposition of a state of emergency in North-West Province on 27 October 1992, large scale arrests have taken place in Bamenda, mostly of SDF supporters. Many of those detained, as well as members of their families, were beaten at the time of their arrest. It is thought that as many as 200 people are being held, including those named above, by the Brigade mixte mobile, the security police, and by the gendarmerie. They are held incommunicado, denied access to families and lawyers, and it is feared that they may be tortured.

Under the Law relating to the State of Emergency (Loi relative à l'état d'urgence), No. 90/47 of 19 December 1990, a state of emergency can be declared by presidential decree

for up to six months, and people who are considered to be a threat to public safety may be held in administrative detention without charge or trial: by order of the Minister of Territorial Administration (minister of the interior) for up to four months, by Provincial Governors and Senior Divisional Officers for up to 15 and seven days respectively.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The final results of the presidential elections on 11 October 1992 were announced by the Supreme Court on 23 October, with the incumbent, President Paul Biya, winning a majority of votes over his main rival John Fru Ndi. Amid reports of widespread vote-rigging and electoral fraud, the SDF declared that it would not accept the results of the election and called for a general strike on 26 October 1992. There was rioting in Bamenda following the results in which the houses of some government supporters were set on fire and three people died, including Tita Fomukong, leader of the Cameroon National Party (which supported President Biya).

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

- expressing concern at the large scale detention of opposition supporters, including the restriction of John Fru Ndi and over 120 supporters at his house in Bamenda and the detention of at least 200 others in Bamenda including those named above;
- expressing concern at reports of the torture and ill-treatment of detainees in Bamenda and Douala;
- stating that Amnesty International believes that many of the detainees are prisoners of conscience who have not used or advocated violence but who have been detained because of their non-violent criticism of the government;
- calling on the Cameroonian authorities to release all prisoners of conscience immediately and to release all other detainees unless they are to be charged with recognizably criminal offences and tried promptly and fairly;
- urging that they be safeguarded against torture or ill-treatment, and be given appropriate food, shelter and medical care as well as full access to their families and lawyers.

APPEALS TO

1) President:

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

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

Telegrams: President Biya, Yaounde, Cameroon

Faxes: + 237 221699

Telexes: 8207 PRESID KN (Secretariat général), 8595 PRESID B KN (Cabinet civil)

2) Prime Minister:

Mr Simon Achidi Achu
Prime Minister's Office
Immeuble Etoile, Yaoundé, Cameroon

**Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre/
Dear Prime Minister**

Telegrams: Prime Minister Achu, Yaounde, Cameroon

Faxes: + 237 235765

Telexes: 8282 KN

3) Minister of Internal Affairs:

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

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre /
Dear Minister**

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

4) Mr John Ebong Ngolle

Salutation: Monsieur le Gouverneur /

Governor of North-West Province
Governor's Office, 5000 Bamenda, Cameroon

Dear Governor

Telegrams: North-West Province Governor Ngolle, Bamenda, Cameroon

COPIES OF SOME OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

The following newspapers:

Postwatch

PO Box 235, Bamenda, Cameroon

L'Expression

BP 5646, Douala, Cameroon

Cameroon Post

BP 1981, Yaoundé, Cameroon

La Gazette

BP 5485, Douala, Cameroon

The Gazette

PO Box 408, Limbe, Cameroon

Dikalo

BP 12656, Douala, Cameroon

Cameroon Outlook

BP 124, Limbe, Cameroon

Challenge Nouveau

BP 13088, 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 11 December 1992.