

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Medical Concern

11 September 1991

DJIBOUTI: Aref Mohamed Aref, 39-year-old lawyer

Amnesty International is concerned about the health of Aref Mohamed Aref who is currently ill in a remote prison in Djibouti where he has been detained since January 1991. (See UA 20/91, AFR 23/01/91, 21 January 1991). He is reported to be suffering from tachycardia (abnormally rapid heartbeat) and food poisoning in Ali-Adde prison near Dikhil on the Ethiopian border. The Djibouti authorities are not allowing him to be transferred to hospital in the capital, Djibouti, for proper medical investigation and treatment, even though the prison medical authorities reportedly recommended this.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Aref Mohamed Aref, a 39-year-old lawyer, who has previously defended political prisoners in Djibouti, was arrested on 13 January 1991 together with his uncle, Ali Aref Bourhane, aged 57, a prominent government opponent and former Prime Minister (président du gouvernement) before independence from France in 1977, and many other members of the Afar ethnic group. Aref Mohamed Aref, his uncle and over a dozen others were later charged with attempting to overthrow the government (atteinte à la sécurité de l'Etat), for which the death penalty could be imposed. The judicial investigation into their case is still continuing and no date has so far been set for their trial, which would take place before a special state security tribunal (tribunal de surêté de la République). International standards for fair trial are not guaranteed by this court, which does not either allow the right of appeal or display judicial independence. Aref Mohamed Aref and his uncle are held in a remote prison where conditions are poor, although they have not been tortured.

Amnesty International is investigating whether Aref Mohamed Aref may be a prisoner of conscience. Djibouti is a one-party state where no official opposition is allowed and several people have been imprisoned in recent years for criticising the government or advocating a multi-party system.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/faxes and airmail letters in FRENCH, if possible:

- expressing concern at reports that Maître Aref Mohamed Aref is ill in a remote prison where conditions are poor and medical facilities are inadequate;
- urging that he be allowed immediate transfer to hospital in the capital, Djibouti, for proper medical tests and treatment;
- stating also Amnesty International's concern at his prolonged pre-trial detention and that the court which would try his case, the state security tribunal, does not meet international standards of fair trial, and expressing the fear that he may be detained solely on account of his non-violent opposition to the government.

APPEALS TO:

1. Son Excellence Monsieur Hassan Gouled APTIDON

[Salutation: Son Excellence]

Président de la République
La Présidence
Djibouti, République de Djibouti

Telegrams: President Aptidon, La Presidence, Djibouti

Faxes: + 253 3550 49; + 253 3501 74

2. Son Excellence Monsieur Barkad Gourad HAMADOU

[Salutation: Son Excellence]

Premier Ministre
Office du Premier Ministre
BP 2086, Djibouti, République de Djibouti

Telegrams: Premier Ministre Hamadou, Djibouti

3. Monsieur Ahmed Boulaleh BARREH

[Salutation: Monsieur]

Ministre de l'Intérieur
Ministère de l'Intérieur
BP 2086, Djibouti, République de Djibouti

Telegrams: Ministre de l'Interieur Barreh, Djibouti

4. Monsieur Ismael Omar GUELLE

[Salutation: Monsieur]

Directeur du Service de Documentation et de sécurité du
cabinet présidentiel
La Présidence
BP 6, Djibouti, République de Djibouti

Telegrams: Directeur Securite Guelle, Djibouti

COPIES TO:

1. Mohamed Djama ELABE

Ministre de la Santé
Ministère de la Santé
Djibouti, République de Djibouti

2. Monsieur Ougoureh Hassan IBRAHIM

Ministre de la Justice
Ministere de la Justice
BP 12
Djibouti, République de Djibouti

3. Monsieur Moumin Bahdon FARAH

Ministre des Affaires Etrangères
Ministère des Affaires Etrangères
BP 1863
Djibouti, République de Djibouti

and to diplomatic representatives of Djibouti in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 October 1991.