

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Please draw this action to the attention of the person responsible for outreach work in your section as it is felt that appeals from women's groups and environmental organizations might be particularly effective

UA 58/93

Fear for safety

4 March 1993

**KENYA: Wangari Maathai (female) - environmentalist, opposition
activist**

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of Professor Wangari Maathai, who has gone into hiding in fear for her life.

Wangari Maathai went into hiding following a public accusation by President Moi on 20 February 1993 that she was distributing "inflammatory leaflets" in a violence-torn area in western Kenya, and after the abduction and beating on 25 February 1993 by masked assailants of her colleague, John Makanga, at his pharmacy at the Nairobi Hilton Hotel. John Makanga was brought to court by the police on 1 March and charged with distributing seditious publications. He showed signs of new injuries evidently sustained in police custody, and his assailants had clearly been police officers (see UA 54/93, AFR 32/06/93, 2 March 1993).

Wangari Maathai has expressed fears that she could be attacked by unidentified security agents, arrested for "sedition" and jailed in an unfair trial, or even killed, because of her allegations of government involvement in the violence in western Kenya.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In February 1993 there were renewed clashes between members of the Kalenjin and Kikuyu ethnic groups in Uasin Gishu district in Rift Valley Province. Several people were killed near the town of Burnt Forest and hundreds were forced to flee their homes. Wangari Maathai and John Makanga had apparently visited Kikuyu victims of the clashes who were being helped in church refugee centres. They reportedly distributed leaflets about a "Tribal Clashes Resettlement Volunteer Service" which criticised the authorities for encouraging or condoning the attacks by Kalenjins (members of President Moi's ethnic group) and which urged Kikuyus to defend themselves, as the police were failing in this task. Wangari Maathai rejected accusations by government members and Kenya African National Union (KANU) party officials that she was provoking the violence under the cover of the Green Belt Movement; she said her purpose was to prevent violence and help the victims. She had appealed to the Police Commissioner to attend a public meeting about the clashes but instead the police arrested John Makanga, a fellow opposition activist, who was due to attend this meeting with her.

Similar "ethnic clashes" in 1992 left tens of thousands of people displaced

and over 700 people dead, many of them allegedly killed by a "secret army" of "Kalenjin warriors" supported, armed and funded by senior government and KANU party figures. The authorities have taken no action against any of those named in 1992 in investigations by a church-sponsored inquiry and a parliamentary committee.

Professor Wangari Maathai was educated in the United States of America and was the first woman to receive a Ph.D. degree in Kenya. She became Nairobi University's first woman professor, in the department of veterinary anatomy. She left academic life in the mid-1970s and founded the Green Belt **Page 2 of UA 58/93** Movement, an environmental campaigning group. In the early 1980s she was chairperson of the National Council of Women in Kenya, and was awarded several international honours including the Alternative Nobel Prize and the United Nations Environmental Program Global 800 award.

In January 1992 she was arrested by police who forced their way into her barricaded house. This was because she and other prominent government opponents gave a press conference expressing fears of an imminent pro-government army coup and a conspiracy to assassinate themselves and other opposition activists. She was freed quickly on bail after being charged with publishing false rumours: the case is still pending. In March 1992 she was beaten unconscious by riot police when demonstrating in Nairobi with other members of the Release Political Prisoners (RPP) campaigning group (see UA 74/92, AFR 32/04/92, 5 March 1992).

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Wangari Maathai after the public accusations against her and the arrest and ill-treatment of her colleague John Makanga;
- appealing for guarantees for her safety;
- stating that she should not be subject to imprisonment or ill-treatment for the peaceful expression of her opinions and seeking to protect people's human rights.

APPEALS TO:

1) His Excellency President Daniel arap Moi
President of the Republic of Kenya,
Office of the President
P O Box 30510
Nairobi, Kenya

Telegrams: President Moi, Nairobi, Kenya

**Telexes: 22003 FOREIGNRB or 22696 FOREIGNRB
(via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**

Faxes: + 254 2 33 7340 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Salutation: Your Excellency

2) Mr Philip Kilonzo
Commissioner of Police
Kenya Police Headquarters
P O Box 30083
Nairobi, Kenya

Telegrams: Commissioner Kilonzo, Nairobi, Kenya

Salutation: Dear Commissioner

3) Mr Amos Wako
Attorney General
Office of the Attorney General
P O Box 40112
Nairobi, Kenya

Telegrams: Attorney General Wako, Sheria, Nairobi, Kenya
Faxes: + 245 2 211082

Salutation: Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

General Secretary
National Council of Churches in Kenya
PO Box 45009
Nairobi, Kenya

and to diplomatic representatives of Kenya accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 April 1993.