

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 34/008/2002

UA 194/02

Fear for safety/risk of torture or

25 June 2002

ill-treat

**LIBERIA Hassan Bility (m) - editor  
and three other men (names unknown)**

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On 24 June, Hassan Bility, editor of the *Analyst* Newspaper and three others, were harassed and arrested by two plain clothes men, reportedly from the Criminal Investigation Division of the Liberia National Police. They are being held in incommunicado detention and may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

At the time of his arrest, Hassan Bility was reportedly slapped and kicked before being shoved into a car and driven away. According to a news report on Kiss FM radio in the capital Monrovia, Hassan Bility was picked up on suspicion of "...operating a Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) Terrorist Cell in Monrovia". Hassan Bility has been arrested, questioned and detained twice in the past. The *Analyst* newspaper has been closed down twice, as the result of writing and publishing articles deemed critical of the government.

On 13 May, Hassan Bility received a telephoned death threat from a colonel in the Liberian National Police. He was told " we know you all who are writing against our Papay (President Taylor), and the time is approaching for us to deal with you guys; your writings and opinions are influencing the international community to expose the Papay" The threat came as a result of a speech by Taiwan Gongloe, the contents of which were considered threatening to the government and its national security. As a result of the speech, Taiwan Gongloe, a well known human rights lawyer, was arrested, held in detention and tortured, before being released (See UA 128/02, AFR 34/005/2002, 26 April 2002 and follow-up (AFR 34/006/2002, 3 May 2002)

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Journalists, human rights defenders, and those deemed critical of the government are under constant threat of being arrested, held in detention without charge, and tortured. Since President Taylor declared a state of emergency in early February, there has been increased repression of government critics and those under suspicion of being dissidents and dissident collaborators. On 22 February, Former Chief Justice and current Director of the non-governmental Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, Frances Johnson Morris, was arrested by Police Director Paul Mulbah. She was held with male inmates at the police central prison for several hours. On 28 March, Augustine Toe of the Justice and Peace Commission was arrested and held without charge for several hours. On the same day, police stormed the offices of the National Human Rights Center, and arrested without charge, five staff members.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the safety of Hassan Bility and the three other men who were arrested on 24 June;
- urging the authorities to ensure that they do not suffer any torture or ill-treatment;
- expressing concern that the authorities must either charge the men with a recognizable criminal offence or release them immediately;

- calling on the Liberian authorities to stop the security forces attacking, harassing and ill-treating human rights defenders solely for their legitimate scrutiny and criticism of the Liberian government.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic of Liberia

His Excellency Mr Charles Taylor

Office of the President

Executive Mansion

PO Box 9001

Capitol Hill

Monrovia, Republic of Liberia

**Fax: + 231 228 026 (if someone answers ask for a fax tone)  
or + 231 226 544**

**Salutation: Dear President Taylor**

Director of Police

Paul Mulbah

National Police Force

National Police Headquarters

Monrovia, Republic of Liberia

**Fax: + 231 226 785**

**Salutation: Dear Mr Mulbah**

Minister of Justice

Mr Eddington Varmah

Minister of Justice

Ministry of Justice

Ashmun St,

PO Box 9006

Monrovia, Republic of Liberia

**Fax: + 231 227 872**

**Salutation: Dear Mr Varmah**

**COPIES TO:**

American Embassy in Liberia

Ambassador

Bismark Myrick

111 United Nations Drive

Monrovia, Liberia

**Fax: + 231 226 148/49**

Newspaper

The Analyst,

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**Fax: c/o + 231 227 838 (Please mark for attention of Stanley Sukaloh, Editor, The Analyst)**

and to diplomatic representatives of Liberia accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 August 2002.