

EXTERNAL

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"Disappearance"/Fear for safety

4 December 1997

LIBERIA Samuel Dokie, former deputy speaker of the dissolved Transitional
Legislative assembly and former Minister of Internal Affairs
Janet Dokie, wife of Samuel Dokie
Male relative (name not known)
Bodyguard to the above (name not known)

Samuel Dokie, his wife, Janet Dokie, and two others, were arrested on 29 November 1997 in the town of Gbarnga (160 kilometres northeast of the capital, Monrovia).

There is grave concern for their safety and fears that others close to Samuel Dokie may also now be at risk.

The arrests were made by unidentified security officials apparently acting on behalf of the Special Security Service who stated the four were wanted in Monrovia for "security reasons". Efforts to trace them in the custody of the police and other security forces have failed. A *habeas corpus* application has been made by a national human rights non-governmental organization and is pending before a court in Monrovia.

Samuel Dokie was formerly a member of the now disbanded National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), one of the principal armed factions in the Liberian civil war. He was also formerly a close ally of the NPFL's leader, Charles Taylor, since elected President of the Republic of Liberia. However, the two men became political rivals for the NPFL leadership in 1994. Samuel Dokie subsequently joined an opposing faction of the NPFL - the NPFL Central Revolutionary Council. The two NPFL factions were then involved in a struggle for control of Gbarnga, the headquarters of NPFL leader Charles Taylor. In early 1996 a journalist was detained after he wrote an article claiming that the NPFL had plans to kill opponents, including Samuel Dokie.

On 3 December 1997 President Charles Taylor expressed shock at the news of the abduction of Samuel Dokie and ordered the Ministers of Justice, Defence and National Security and the Director of Police to use "*any and all available means necessary ...to provide information on the whereabouts of ... Samuel Dokie and his wife*". He said his administration would leave "*no stone unturned to get under a very cowardly and unpatriotic act, and to bring whoever is responsible to justice.*"

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1989, Charles Taylor's NPFL launched the war which overthrew the government of President Samuel Doe and which lasted until 1996. During the seven years of war, all sides to the conflict committed serious human rights abuses with impunity. Both presidential and legislative elections were held in July 1997.

These were won by The National Patriotic Party (NPP), headed by Charles Taylor.

Samuel Dokie stood for election as the parliamentary candidate for the Unity Party, the main rival to the NPP. The thirteen parties which contested the elections included those of two other former faction leaders. Amnesty International has visited Liberia twice during 1997 and recently met the newly elected government. Delegates urged the government to give the highest priority to respecting human rights as a vital aspect of national reconstruction based on reconciliation and peace.

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

- expressing concern for the safety of Samuel Dokie, Janet Dokie and two others who have not been seen since they were allegedly taken into custody by security officials on 29 November 1997;
- urging that all possible measures be taken to ensure their safety;
- welcoming the President's call for an urgent investigation into their whereabouts and urging the authorities to urgently carry out this investigation and to make public the findings;
- welcoming the President's statement that those responsible will be brought to justice and urging that this be done in a fair and independent manner in accordance with international human rights standards;
- stating that if the investigation and administration of justice are carried out in a fair and independent way, this would mark an important step towards ending impunity for human rights violations in Liberia.

APPEALS TO:

Charles Taylor
President of the Republic of Liberia
Office of the President, Executive Mansion
PO Box 9001, Capitol Hill, Monrovia, Liberia
Telegrams: Charles Taylor, President, Liberia
Salutation: Dear President

Peter B. Jallah
Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice
Ashmun St, PO Box 9006
Monrovia, Liberia
Telegrams: Minister Justice, Monrovia, Liberia
Faxes: + 231 227872
Salutation: Dear Minister

Daniel Chea
Minister of Defence, Ministry of Defence
Benson St., PO Box 9007, Monrovia, Liberia
Telegrams: Minister Defence, Monrovia, Liberia
Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr. Edward Komo Sackor
Minister of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs
Cnr Warren and Benson Sts, PO Box 9008, Monrovia, Liberia
Telegrams: Minister Internal Affairs, Monrovia, Liberia
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Daily Observer (newspaper)	The Inquirer (newspaper)
Faxes: + 231 227838	Faxes: + 231 227838

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 15 January 1998.