

PUBLIC

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To: Health professionals
From: Medical Office / Africa Program
Date: 15 March 2000

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION
Eight prisoners
Togo

Key words: lack of medical care / torture / ill-treatment / death in detention

Summary

Amnesty International is concerned at the worsening health of eight prisoners held in Kara prison, in the north of Togo, and the lack of medical care available to them. The prisoners are held in harsh prison conditions amounting to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. They are not being provided with sufficient food and sanitary conditions are very poor. In addition, since their arrest in Togo they have been beaten repeatedly and are at risk of further torture. One prisoner belonging to this group, Ntsukpui Attisso, has already died while in detention - allegedly as a result of the beatings he received, insufficient food and harsh prison conditions. He reportedly had not been provided with medical care despite requesting it.

Recommended Actions

Please write polite letters, preferably in French, in your professional capacity to the addresses below:

- seeking information about the diagnosis and current health of the prisoners Amegninou (known as Samba Santos), Doni Koffi Mawuli Kové, Kliko Kokou Yovodévi (known as Gildas Eglo), Lawson Akouete Latévi (known as Kalakouta), Messan Kokou Paul (known as Hebiesso), Nyabledji John, Seke Koudjo (known as Django) and Sosouvi Kovi Hounvé;
- urging that the eight prisoners are provided with adequate medical care according to their needs as provided for by international human rights standards such as the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners [Article 22];
- expressing concern about the eight prisoners being ill-treated and tortured while in detention;
- urging that those responsible for ill-treatment and torture are brought to justice and that the eight prisoners' physical security be guaranteed;
- expressing concern at the death of Ntsukpui Attisso;
- urging the Togolese authorities to carry out an independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding his death and to make the findings of the investigation public;
- seeking information about the medical services available in the prison.

If you receive no reply from the government or other recipients within two months of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow up letter seeking a response. Please check with the medical team if you are sending appeals after 1 May 2000, and send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat (att: medical team).

ADDRESSES

Please send your appeals to the following addresses:

Son Excellence
Monsieur le Général Gnassingbé Eyadéma
Président de la République
Palais Présidentiel
Avenue de la Marina
Lomé, Togo
email: <http://www.republicoftogo.com/english/ecrir-pdt.html>

Général Séyi Méméne
Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
Avenue de la Marina
Rue Colonel de Roux
Lomé, Togo

Public Prosecutor
Monsieur Yaya Abdoulaye
Procureur Général, BP 342, Lomé, Togo

Director
Civil Prison of Kara
Kara
Préfecture de Kozah, Togo

COPIES TO

Please send copies of your letters to the following addresses:

Crocodile
BP 60087 Lomé
Togo

Ligue Togolaise des Droits de l'Homme (LTDH)
BP 2302 Lomé
Togo

Association Togolaise pour la Défense et la Promotion des Droits Humains (ATDPDH)
Angle Rue Adjallé et F. Mitterand
BP 7165 Lomé
Togo

and to diplomatic representatives of Togo accredited to your country.

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MEDICAL CONCERN
Eight prisoners
Togo

At the end of 1997 nine Togolese men in Ghana - Amegninou (known as Samba Santos), Doni Koffi Mawuli Kové, Kliko Kokou Yovodévi (known as Gildas Eglo), Lawson Akouete Latévi (known as Kalakouta), Messan Kokou Paul (known as Hebiesso), Ntsukpui Attisso, Nyabledji John, Seke Koudjo (known as Django) and Sosouvi Kovi Hounvé - were handed over to the Togolese authorities by Ghana. They had been accused of minor crimes in Ghana. Several of these nine prisoners are members of the *Comité Togolais pour la Résistance* (CTR), the Togolese Resistance Committee, an opposition party in exile. They were first held in the civil prison and at the *Direction de la Police Judiciaire* (DPJ) in Lomé. In July 1998 they were transferred to Kara prison in the north of Togo.

Amnesty International has received reports that on their arrival at the civil prison of Lomé the prison guards turned the lights off, tied the prisoners' hands and beat, slapped, and kicked them. It is reported that one of them, Nyabledji John, was forced to eat sand and afterwards was refused water. After being beaten the prisoners reportedly could not walk and they had difficulties with breathing.

When held at the *Département de Police Judiciaire*, the prisoners were reportedly kept tied. They were not given any food by prison authorities, but received food from their families. The prisoners were also not allowed to leave the cell at any time.

On 27 April 1998 Ntsukpui Attisso died allegedly as a result of the beatings he received, insufficient food and harsh prison conditions. He reportedly had not been provided with medical care despite requesting it. To Amnesty International's knowledge the body has not been returned to the family.

The eight other prisoners are reportedly suffering from malaria as well as skin diseases. Prison authorities have not provided them with the medication they need. Their wives travel from Ghana to Kara prison in Togo with medication when they can afford it. In addition, prison conditions in Kara prison are harsh. The prisoners receive an insufficient amount of food. They can only wash themselves twice a week. They sleep on the floor and are only allowed to wear underwear. The prisoners are only allowed to see members of their family in order to receive food or medicine. Visitors to the prison who had the opportunity to get close to these prisoners told Amnesty International that they looked like skeletons.

A former prisoner at Kara prison has told Amnesty International that almost no daylight penetrated his cell: "with the absence of light inside the cell, I had the feeling of walking about in a void, stumbling sometimes on outings to the shower".

To Amnesty International's knowledge the eight prisoners have not been tried. Amnesty International has investigated several cases of arbitrary arrest, torture and summary execution of Togolese who have been suspected of belonging to armed opposition groups based in Ghana.

Background information

The Togolese security forces have tortured, kidnapped, extrajudicially executed and imprisoned government opponents and critics for many years with impunity.

Throughout the country conditions of detention are extremely harsh. They are far from meeting international standards for the treatment of prisoners, specifically the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment. The conditions of detention of prisoners are so deplorable that they constitute a denial of their most fundamental rights. They threaten health and life and amount to a form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

The harsh conditions in detention also violate Article 5 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, which guarantees the "right to respect for the dignity inherent in a human being and prohibits the infliction of cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment".