

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Arbitrary detention/Torture

3 September 1993

ZAIRE: Kalala Mbenga KALAO, journalist

Amnesty International has received reports that Kalala Mbenga Kalao was arrested on 25 August 1993 in Lemba district of the capital, Kinshasa. He was reportedly subjected to beatings at the time of his arrest. His health condition is not known, as he is being held incommunicado. He has not been charged with any offence nor referred to a magistrate.

He was arrested by members of the Garde civile, Civil Guard. He was first detained at the Institut supérieur des bâtiments, Higher Institute for Building Trade, which the Civil Guard has turned into its offices and detention centre. He was subsequently transferred to a detention centre of the Service d'action et de renseignements militaires (SARM), Military Action and Intelligence Service, where he is believed to be still held. Conditions in most Zairian detention centres supervised by the security forces are very harsh and detainees are often deprived of food and water, subjected to torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment while being held in cramped and unsanitary cells.

Kalala Mbenga Kalao is editor of a column known as "Nation" in Tempête des tropiques, an opposition newspaper. He was reportedly arrested because in three of its recent editions the newspaper published the identities, units and ranks and place of origin of high ranking officers of the Zairian Armed Forces. The statistics allegedly showed that 70 per cent of the officers belong to the same ethnic group, Ngbandi, as President Mobutu Sese Seko.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Several dozen known or suspected opponents of President Mobutu have been detained this year in various detention centres in Kinshasa. The detainees include politicians, journalists and trade unionists in a wave of arrests which began in April 1993. Many of them have been arrested by members of the security police or armed forces loyal to President Mobutu. Although many of those arrested between April and June 1993 have been released, it is believed that some others are still held. Virtually all of them have been arrested because of their non-violent opposition to or criticism of President Mobutu and his policies and most of them have been considered by Amnesty International to be prisoners of conscience.

Several dozen independent newspapers have been established since 1990 when President Mobutu announced political and other reforms. Although the papers were initially allowed to operate without restrictions, the authorities clamped down when it became clear that most of them were critical of President Mobutu, his supporters and members of the security forces loyal to him. Journalists have been imprisoned and government agents have destroyed printing presses

and offices, and attacked newspaper vendors.

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

- expressing concern at the arrest of Kalala Mbenga Kalao on 25 August 1993 in Kinshasa; adding that he appears to be a prisoner of conscience, arbitrarily detained because he published information in pursuit of his profession as a journalist;

- expressing concern at reports that he was subjected to beatings at the time of his arrest and has since been held incommunicado, first by the Civil Guard and subsequently by the military security service;

- expressing fears for his safety and seeking assurances that he is not being subjected to torture or other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment;
- asking that unless he is to be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial in conformity with international standards of fairness, he be released immediately and unconditionally;
- urging that he be given immediate access to legal counsel, relatives and any necessary medical attention.

APPEALS TO

1) President:

Son Excellence Maréchal Mobutu Sese Seko
Président de la République
Kinshasa-Ngaliema
République du Zaïre

Telegrams: Président Maréchal Mobutu, Kinshasa-Ngaliema, Zaïre

Telexes: 21368

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République/Dear President

2) Head of Civil Guard

Monsieur VUMBO Ndebo
Chef d'Etat-major de la
Garde Civile
Présidence de la Garde Civile
Présidence de la République
Kinshasa-Ngaliema
République du Zaïre

Telegrams: Monsieur Vumbo, Kinshasa, Zaïre

Salutation: Monsieur le Chef d'Etat-major/Dear Head of Civil Guard

3) Head of military security service

Général-Major LONGUELO Mule Wa Mozombo
Chef d'Etat-major du SARM
Ministère de la Défense nationale
BP 4734

Kinshasa-Ngaliema

République du Zaïre

Telegrams: Général Longuelo, Kinshasa, Zaïre

Salutation: Monsieur le Chef d'Etat-major/Dear Chief of Staff

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) Human Rights Organization:

Ligue zairoise des droits de l'homme
20 rue Drairy
6000 Charleroi, Belgium

2) Armed forces Chief of General Staff:

Monsieur le Grand Amiral Eluki Monga
Chef d'Etat-major Général des FAZ
Ministère de la Défense nationale
Kinshasa-Ngaliema
République du Zaïre

3) Le Potentiel (newspaper)

2 Avenue Msi-Manimba
BP 11338
Kinshasa 1
Zaïre

4) Elima (newspaper)

BP 10017
Kinshasa-Limete
Zaïre

and to diplomatic representatives of Zaïre accredited to your country.

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