

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 62/27/97

UA 298/97

Ill-treatment / Prisoner of conscience

9 September 1997

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC) Didi Mwati Bulambo, human rights activist

---

Didi Mwati Bulambo, a prominent local human rights activist, was arrested by soldiers on 23 August 1997 and is being held in a military camp in Kamituga, Mwenga district of South-Kivu. Amnesty International believes that he is a prisoner of conscience. Reports that he has been ill-treated in detention have raised concern for his well-being.

Didi Mwati Bulambo is the general coordinator of the *Collectif d'action pour le développement des droits de l'homme* (CADDHOM), Collective of Actions for Human Rights Development, a non-governmental organization in Kamituga. The official motive for his arrest has been given as incitement of the population against the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre* (AFDL), the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaïre, the Congolese national army. However, Amnesty International believes he was arrested because of his human rights activities. He has been allowed access to one of his relatives, who brings him food, but has not been allowed access to other members of his family, to legal counsel or to medical care.

Didi Mwati Bulambo was arrested and detained previously in July 1996, following a series of articles he had written criticizing corruption in the Procuracy of Kamituga. During his detention at that time, he was subjected to whippings and denied access to a doctor after he became ill.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Hundreds of people are reported to have been arrested in various parts of the DRC since the AFDL took power on 17 May 1997. The vast majority of these arrests are reported to be arbitrary, carried out without arrest warrants, by soldiers who do not have the legal power to make arrests under Congolese law. Detainees are often held incommunicado, sometimes in unofficial detention centres such as private residences. Reports of ill-treatment and torture are common.

Those arrested have included members of political opposition groups critical of the AFDL, journalists, human rights activists as well as many dignitaries, including ministers of the former government. The AFDL have officially banned political parties outside of the Alliance and suspended the Zaïrian constitution which guaranteed freedom of association and the right to hold peaceful demonstrations.

Forces of the AFDL have also committed other severe human rights violations in recent weeks, including dozens of extrajudicial executions in the capital Kinshasa. Amnesty International has urged the authorities to investigate such allegations and bring the perpetrators to justice.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/express/airmail letters in French or your own language:**

- expressing concern that Didi Mwati Bulambo is a prisoner of conscience held solely because of his human rights activities, and calling for his immediate and unconditional release;
- expressing concern at reports of his ill-treatment and urging that immediate steps be taken to ensure that he will not be subjected to further ill-treatment;
- urging that he be allowed full access to his family, medical care and legal counsel;

- asking for information on the reason for his arrest;

**if possible, also:**

- calling for immediate steps to end the current trend of arbitrary arrests and incommunicado detention in the DRC by prohibiting the use of unofficial detention centres and taking action within the law against military or civilian authorities who arrest and detain people without the legal authority to do so.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Justice

M. Célestin LWANGI

Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

BP 3137

Kinshasa-Gombe

Democratic Republic of Congo

**Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Kinshasa, DR Congo**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister**

Minister of the Interior

M. Mwenze KONGOLO

Ministre de l'Intérieur

Hôtel du Conseil exécutif

Kinshasa-Gombe

Democratic Republic of Congo

**Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Kinshasa, DR Congo**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Commandant Anselme Masasu NINDAGA

Chef d'Etat-Major de l'AFDL

Ministère de la Défense

BP 4734

Kinshasa-Gombe

Democratic Republic of Congo

and to diplomatic representatives of the Democratic Republic of Congo accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 October 1997.