

14 May 1997

Further information on UA 105/97 (AFR 17/05/97, 16 April 1997) - Torture and ill-treatment/possible prisoners of conscience and new Medical concern / Death in custody

CAMEROON Reports of torture amid large scale arrests

Amnesty International remains seriously concerned about the health and safety of an estimated 200 people, possibly more, who have been arrested since violent incidents occurred in North-West Province in late March 1997.

Most are held incommunicado, denied visits from families, lawyers and doctors, at the Gendarmerie Legion headquarters in Bamenda, the paramilitary police. Others are held at the headquarters of the *Brigade Mixte Mobile* (BMM), the security police, in Bamenda. Many are reported to have been tortured and ill-treated at the time of their arrest and there is serious concern that those held at the Gendarmerie Legion continue to be tortured and ill-treated. One person, **Samuel Tita**, is reported to have died in detention as a result of torture on about 1 May 1997, a month after his arrest.

Some of those detained at the Gendarmerie Legion sustained serious injuries at the time of their arrest, including bullet and bayonet wounds. They include **Martin Chenwie, Thomas Fonkwa, Peter Nyamka Niba, Wilson Che Niba, Wilfred Angwafor Nji** and **Paul Tibit Toka**. The detainees are not allowed access to doctors and their families are not allowed to provide food and other necessities.

Also held without charge or trial at the Gendarmerie Legion in Bamenda are **George Ngwa, Che Fidelis Che, Gabriel Ambe, Suh Abraham Mbonifor, Ngwa Eric Ndamukong** and **Azinwi Denis Che** who were arrested on 31 March 1997. Eight school students who were arrested in Oku, Bui Division, are also reported to remain in detention; they include **Nsom Godlove**, aged 14, **Eric Sah**, aged 14, and **Kedzem Zoah**, aged 13.

There is strong support for the opposition in North-West Province and most of those arrested are members or supporters of one of the main opposition political parties, the Social Democratic Front (SDF). SDF officials who remain detained at the Gendarmerie Legion in Bamenda include **Joseph Abongwi, Simon Achu, Gregory Afenji** and **Edet Che Ndingsah**. About 14 other people, mostly members and supporters of the SDF, remain held at the BMM headquarters.

Several of those arrested in North-West Province were subsequently transferred to the capital, Yaoundé. Although some were later released, 16 remain held at a gendarmerie headquarters in Yaoundé. On 4 May 1997 they began a hunger-strike in support of their demand to be either charged or released.

The arrests followed a series of armed attacks in late March 1997 on military, police and civilian establishments in several towns in North-West Province. Ten people, including a gendarmerie commander and two other gendarmes, died as a result of the attacks, which the authorities have attributed to a group supporting independence for Cameroon's two English-speaking provinces. Amnesty International acknowledges the government's responsibility to bring to justice those responsible for criminal acts. However, many people appear to have been arrested and detained only because of their association with the SDF, without evidence of involvement in any criminal activity. No charges have yet been brought against any of those detained.

Legislative elections are scheduled to take place in Cameroon on 17 May 1997.

On 12 May Amnesty International called on the government of Cameroon to ensure that all Cameroonian citizens are able to exercise their right to vote without fear of arrest, detention and ill-treatment.

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

- expressing deep concern about continuing reports of torture and ill-treatment of those arrested in North-West Province since late March 1997 and, in particular, about the death of Samuel Tita, apparently as a result of torture;
- urging immediate and independent investigations into Samuel Tita's death and all other allegations of torture, in order to bring those responsible to justice;
- expressing concern about reports that many of those held are in a serious state of health and in need of medical attention, and urging that they be immediately allowed access to doctors of their choice;
- urging that they also be allowed access to lawyers and their families;
- while acknowledging the responsibility of the government to bring to justice those responsible for criminal acts, requesting clarification of the reasons for the continued detention without charge or trial of those still detained;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of anyone detained only because of their political opinions and activities, who has neither used nor advocated violence.

APPEALS TO:

President

Son Excellence M. Paul Biya
Président de la République
Palais de l'Unité
1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Fax: +237 221 699

Telegrams: President, Yaounde, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President Biya

Deputy Prime Minister, responsible for territorial administration
(Interior)

M. Gilbert Andzé Tsoungui
Vice-Premier Ministre chargé de l'Administration territoriale
Ministère de l'Administration territoriale
1000 Yaoundé 4, Cameroon

Telegrams: Vice-Premier Ministre Tsoungui, Yaounde, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Vice-Premier Ministre / Dear Deputy Prime Minister

Secretary of State for National Security

M. Luc Loé
Secrétaire d'Etat à la Sécurité intérieure
Sûreté nationale
1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telegrams: Secrétaire d'Etat Loé, Yaounde, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Secrétaire d'Etat / Dear Minister of State

Commander, Gendarmerie Legion

Colonel Mohamadou Ousseini
Provincial Legion Commander
Gendarmerie Legion

5000 Bamenda, North-West Province, Cameroon

Telegrams: Gendarmerie Legion Commander, Bamenda, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Colonel / Dear Colonel Ousseini

COPIES TO:

Mr Francis Fai Yengo, Governor of North-West Province, Governor's Office,
5000 Bamenda, North-West Province, Cameroon

Cameroon Post, BP 1981, Yaoundé, Cameroon

The Herald, BP 3659 Messa, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Le Messenger, BP 5925, 11 Boulevard de la Liberté, Douala, Cameroon

La Nouvelle Expression, BP 15333, 12 rue Prince de Galles, Douala, Cameroon

and to diplomatic representatives of Cameroon accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with your Section office, or the
International Secretariat, if sending appeals after 2 July 1997.