

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 17/11/96

11 December 1996

Further information (3) on UA 250/96 (AFR 17/06/96, 31 October 1996) and follow-ups AFR 17/08/96, 12 November 1996, and AFR 17/09/96 15 November 1996 - Prisoner of conscience/fear of further POCs

CAMEROONEvariste Menouga

Peter William Mandio

- journalists on *Le Nouvel Indépendant* newspaper

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There have been further arrests of journalists in Cameroon. Evariste Menouga, a journalist on the independent newspaper *Le Nouvel Indépendant*, was arrested on 27 November 1996 in Yaoundé. His colleague, Peter William Mandio, was arrested around 7 December 1996. Both men are being held at the gendarmerie headquarters in Yaoundé.

Evariste Menouga and Peter William Mandio have apparently been detained in connection with an article which appeared in *Le Nouvel Indépendant* on 3 October 1996 which criticized the Minister of Public Works. No charges have yet been brought against either journalist. Their detention has exceeded the 72 hours allowed by law before they are either brought before a judicial authority to be charged or released.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In October 1996 the Minister of the Interior (*Ministre de l'Administration territoriale*) declared that *Le Nouvel Indépendant* was operating illegally because its director had been absent from the country for several months. The director of *Le Nouvel Indépendant*, Ndzana Seme, was arrested in early June 1995 and held for more than two months in Yaoundé Central Prison, known as Nkondengui prison, after publishing an article criticizing the government. In August 1995 he was convicted of inciting revolt and received a two-month suspended sentence. The Attorney General and Minister of Justice appealed against this sentence and in October 1995 he was also convicted of insulting the head of state and non-compliance with pre-publication censorship requirements; his sentence was increased to one year's imprisonment and a fine. Ndzana Seme went into hiding and finally fled Cameroon in early 1996.

Restrictions on freedom of expression have intensified in Cameroon during 1996. At least seven journalists have been sentenced to prison terms and others have been held without charge. Newspapers have been closed down. In some cases there have been serious irregularities in judicial procedures. Prosecutions against journalists appear to be attempts to inhibit criticism of prominent government members, those closely associated with them, or government policies.

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

- expressing concern about the recent arrests and continuing detention of Evariste Menouga and Peter William Mandio, both journalists on the newspaper *Le Nouvel Indépendant*;
- requesting clarification of the legal basis of their continuing detention;
- urging their immediate and unconditional release if, as it appears, they are being held solely for undertaking their professional activities as journalists and exercising their right to freedom of expression;
- expressing concern about the increasing number of journalists who have been arrested, detained, convicted and imprisoned in Cameroon and reminding the

government of Cameroon of its obligations to guarantee the right to freedom of expression under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which it ratified in 1984.

**APPEALS TO:**

President

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

**Faxes: + 237 221 699**

**Telegrams: Président Biya, Yaoundé, Cameroon**

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

Prime Minister

Mr Peter Mafany Musonge  
Premier Ministre  
Cabinet du Premier Ministre  
Immeuble Étoile  
1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

**Faxes: + 237 235 765**

**Telegrams: Premier Ministre Musonge, Yaoundé, Cameroon**

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

Minister of Justice

M. Laurent Ezzo  
Ministre de la Justice, Garde des Sceaux  
Ministère de la Justice  
1000 Yaoundé, République du Cameroun

**Telegrams: Ministre de la Justice, Yaoundé, Cameroon**

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

Minister of State for Communication

M. Augustin Kontchou Kouomegni  
Ministre d'Etat chargé de la Communication,  
Ministère de la Communication  
BP 1588, Yaoundé, République du Cameroun

**Telegrams: Ministre de Communication, Yaoundé, Cameroon**

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

**COPIES TO:**

- *Le Messager*, BP 5925, 11 Boulevard de la Liberté, Douala, République du Cameroun
- *Cameroon Post*, BP 1981, Yaoundé, République du Cameroun
- *The Herald*, BP 3659 Messa, Yaoundé, République du Cameroun
- *La Nouvelle Expression*, BP 15333, 12 rue Prince de Galles, Douala, République du Cameroun

and to diplomatic representatives of Cameroon accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 January 1997.