

23 June 1997

Further information on UA 176/97 (AFR 17/12/97, 23 June 1997) - Cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment / Health concern / Probable prisoners of conscience

**CAMEROON40 members and supporters of the Social Democratic Front (SDF), including:
Alhadji Sani, SDF Provincial Coordinator for Central Province
Prince Fesco William Manga, SDF Divisional Coordinator for Fako Division, South-West Province**

The 13 members and supporters of the Social Democratic Front (SDF), the principal opposition group in Cameroon, who were arrested on 6 June 1997 in the capital, Yaoundé, at the time of the announcement of the results of parliamentary elections, were released a week later. They included Alhadji Sani, SDF Provincial Coordinator for Central Province. It appears that the charges of inciting revolt brought against them are to be dropped. Two other SDF members, Prince Fesco William Manga, arrested on 5 June, and Du Du Wimgang, arrested on 7 June, were also released.

Other SDF members and supporters - at least 25 and possibly as many as 50 - who had been arrested between 15 May and 5 June in South-West Province and held without charge or trial in Buea and Kumba were released between 19 and 21 June. They were reported to have been arrested on the orders of the Governor of South-West Province, Peter Oben Ashu, and held in administrative detention under provisions of legislation introduced in December 1990. The releases followed an announcement by the 43 SDF members of the National Assembly that they planned to go to South-West Province in order to demand the release of the detained SDF members and supporters.

Amnesty International believed that most, if not all, of those arrested and detained were prisoners of conscience, detained only because of their peaceful opinions and activities. There was also concern for their well-being while detained; conditions in police stations, gendarmerie (paramilitary police) headquarters and prisons throughout Cameroon are extremely harsh and amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

Parliamentary elections were held on 17 May. The ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement, *Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounais*, received an absolute majority with 109 seats. The main opposition parties, the SDF and the *Union nationale pour la démocratie et le progrès*, National Union for Democracy and Progress, received 43 and 13 seats respectively. Both parties had earlier called on the Supreme Court to annul the elections because of widespread fraud and irregularities. International observers noted that the elections had been marred by cases of fraud and intimidation.

Participants may send faxes/express/airmail letters in English, French or your own language:

- welcoming the recent releases of members and supporters of the Social Democratic Front (SDF), including 15 arrested around 6 June 1997 in Yaoundé and others detained in Buea and Kumba in South-West Province;
- expressing concern, however, that they appeared to have been prisoners of conscience, detained only because of their peaceful political opinions and activities;

- reminding the Cameroon Government of its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified in 1984, to guarantee the rights to freedom of expression and association.

APPEALS TO:

President

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

Fax: +237 221 699

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

Prime Minister

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

Fax: +237 235 765

Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre / Dear Prime Minister

Minister of Justice

M. Laurent Easo
Mknistre de la Justice, Garde des Sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Governor of South-West Province

Mr Peter Oben Ashu
Governor of South-West Province
Governor's Office
7000 Buea, South-West Province, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Gouverneur / Dear Governor

COPIES TO:

Dr Solomon Nfor Gwei
President, National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms
PO Box 20317
Yaoundé, Cameroon

Cameroon Post, BP 1981, Yaoundé, Cameroon
The Herald, BP 3659 Messa, Yaoundé, Cameroon
Le Messager, 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 the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 August 1997.