

EXTERNAL

AI Index: AFR 17/29/97

UA 378/97

Fear of refoulement

1 December 1997

CAMEROON\CHAD Michel Nguimbaye Barde, Commissioner for Defence and chief of staff of the *Forces armées pour la République fédérale* (FARF), Armed Forces for the Federal Republic

Alamine Guirgue, Executive Secretary of the FARF

Amnesty International is seriously concerned that two Chadian nationals, and possibly a third, are at risk of imminent forcible return from Cameroon to Chad where they could face torture and extrajudicial execution.

Michel Nguimbaye Barde and Alamine Guirgue, prominent members of the *Forces armées pour la République fédérale* (FARF), Armed Forces for the Federal Republic, a former Chadian armed opposition group, were arrested on 17 November 1997 at the village of Afadé, close to the border of Chad, near Kousséri, in Logone Chari Division in the Far-North Province of Cameroon. They were taken first to Kousséri and subsequently to the Cameroonian capital, Yaoundé, where they are being held at a police station. They are not known to have been charged with any offence. Some reports refer to a third member of the FARF also being arrested at the same time.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Following confrontations between Chadian security forces and members of the former FARF in Moundou, Logone Occidental, in southern Chad on 30 October 1997, during which at least two soldiers and 40 FARF members were killed, members of the security forces extrajudicially executed or arrested and then tortured and ill-treated many unarmed civilians whom they suspected of being members or supporters of the FARF in both Logone Occidental and Logone Oriental. More than 40 unarmed civilians were killed, others remain "disappeared". Members of the family of Désiré Laonoji, Executive Secretary of the FARF, were all extrajudicially executed (see EXTRA 151/97, 4 November 1997, AFR 20/12/97).

Many civilians have fled Logone Occidental and Logone Oriental to other parts of the country or to neighbouring countries.

Arrests of FARF members also took place in the Chadian capital, N'Djaména, following these events and four FARF members remain in detention in N'Djaména. They are reported to have been tortured.

On 18 April 1997, a peace accord was signed by the Chadian Government and the FARF which provided for, among other things, integration of members of the FARF into the Chadian national army and the civil service, a general amnesty for all FARF members and supporters and a renunciation of armed struggle by the FARF which would become a political party. In 1995 and 1996 there were many counter-insurgency operations in Logone Occidental and Logone Oriental where the FARF was active. Real and suspected members of the FARF were victims of human rights violations, including arbitrary arrest and torture. The FARF also committed human rights abuses against unarmed civilians, including deliberate and arbitrary killings, torture and ill-treatment.

All countries should respect their commitments under international refugee law, including the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa, to allow all asylum-seekers to their territory, to provide adequate protection and to respect the principle of *non-refoulement*. The OAU Convention, to which Cameroon is a party, states

that "No person shall be subjected by a Member State to measures such as rejection at the frontier, return or expulsion, which would compel him to return to ... a territory where his life, physical integrity or liberty would be threatened...".

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

- expressing concern that these two Chadian nationals, if forcibly returned to Chad, would be at serious risk of torture, ill-treatment and extrajudicial execution;
- urging the Cameroon authorities to respect the principle of *non-refoulement*, in accordance with their obligations under international refugee law, and not to forcibly return these two men to Chad;
- requesting clarification of the reasons for their detention; if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence, they should be immediately and unconditionally released.

APPEALS TO:

Deputy Prime Minister, responsible for the 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, Yaoundé, 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, Yaoundé, Cameroon

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

Minister of Foreign Affairs

M. Ferdinand Léopold Oyono

Ministre des Affaires étrangères

Ministère des Affaires étrangères

1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Faxes: +237 20 11 33 (if voice, say "je voudrais envoyer un fax, s'il vous plaît)

Telegrams: Ministre Affaires étrangères Oyono, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/ Dear Minister

Minister of Justice

M. Laurent Ezzo

Ministre de la Justice, Garde des Sceaux

Ministère de la Justice

1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES 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 12 January 1998.