

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Please bring this action to the attention of the person in your section responsible for outreach work as it is felt that appeals from trade unions may be particularly effective.

6 April 1992

UA 114/92

Legal concern / Fear of extrajudicial execution

MALAWI

Chakufwa Chihana, aged 52, trade union official

Chakufwa Chihana, a leader of the movement for a multi-party political system in Malawi, was reportedly arrested on his return to the country on the afternoon of 6 April 1992. He is a Malawian national and Secretary General of the Southern Africa Trade Union Coordination Council. He had been delegated by a meeting of Malawian opposition groups in Lusaka, Zambia, to organize a national conference of political forces within Malawi. Chakufwa Chihana was arrested at Kamuzu International Airport near Lilongwe, shortly after arriving on a flight from Johannesburg, South Africa, and was reportedly driven away to an unknown destination.

When he last left Malawi on 1 March 1992, Chakufwa Chihana was detained by police in Malawi and questioned for six hours. While he was in Zambia a warrant for his arrest was reported to have been issued in Lilongwe. His wife Christina Chihana, who was dean of the College of Nursing in Lilongwe, was summarily dismissed from her post.

Amnesty International considers Chakufwa Chihana to be a prisoner of conscience, detained for non-violent political opposition. In view of a speech by Life-President Dr H Kamuzu Banda in February 1992, in which he reportedly stated that returning political exiles would be "meat for crocodiles", Amnesty International fears that Chakufwa Chihana may be in danger of extrajudicial execution while in custody, or after his release.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Chakufwa Chihana, aged 52, was detained for seven years from 1971 for his opposition to the one-party government headed by Life-President Banda. He has described how during that period of imprisonment he was kept naked in leg-irons, beaten and subjected to mock executions. Amnesty International adopted him as a prisoner of conscience.

On 8 March 1992, Malawi's Roman Catholic bishops issued a Lenten pastoral letter which criticized various aspects of the government's human rights record and social policies. Freedom of speech is severely restricted in Malawi, with real or suspected government opponents frequently detained and sometimes the victims of extrajudicial executions. The bishops' statement was the first public criticism of Life-President Banda's government since the 1960s. The bishops were questioned by police for eight hours and the pastoral letter was declared a seditious publication. At a meeting of the ruling party broadcast on national radio there were calls for the bishops to be executed for having criticized the Life-President. After international appeals the Malawi Government stated that the bishops' safety was guaranteed. However, these public threats to the bishops gave rise to local attacks by members of the Malawi Congress Party and the paramilitary Malawi Young Pioneers against Roman

Catholic individuals and institutions, notably an arson attack on the press in Balaka where the pastoral letter was printed. Amnesty International fears that Life-President Banda's remarks about "meat for crocodiles" may be interpreted in a similar fashion.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes:

- expressing concern for Chakufwa Chihana's safety, particularly in light of the reported remarks of Life-President Banda that government opponents would be "meat for crocodiles";
- seeking information about his whereabouts and the legal basis for his imprisonment, as well as assurances that he is being properly treated and that he has access to visits from his family and a lawyer of his choice;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Chakufwa Chihana as a prisoner of conscience arrested for non-violent opposition to the single-party system of government.

APPEALS TO:

1. H E The Life-President Ngwazi Dr H. Kamuzu Banda
Office of the President and Cabinet
P/Bag 301
Lilongwe 3
Malawi

Telegrams: Life-President Banda, Lilongwe, Malawi
Telexes: 44389 PRES MI; 44766 JUSTICE MI; 44113 EXTERNAL MI
Faxes: +265 731878
[Salutation: Your Excellency]

2. Hon. J Z U Tembo
Minister of State in the Office of the President
P/Bag 301
Lilongwe 3
Malawi

Telegrams: Minister of State Tembo, Lilongwe, Malawi
[Salutation: Dear Minister]

3. Mr MacWilliam Lunguzi
Inspector-General of Police
P/Bag 305
Lilongwe 3
Malawi

Telegrams: Inspector-General of Police Lunguzi, Lilongwe, Malawi
[Salutation: Dear Sir]

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Southern Africa Trade Union Co-ordination Council
PO Box 1271
Lilongwe
Malawi

The Editor
The Weekly Post
Private Bag EF 352
Lusaka
Zambia

The Editor
The Weekend Gazette
PO Box 66070
Harare
Zimbabwe

and to diplomatic representatives of Malawi in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 May 1992.