

TANZANIA Widespread arbitrary beatings and arrests of opposition party supporters

Amnesty International is very concerned by continuing police violence in Zanzibar, over more than a week now, against supporters of the Civic United Front (CUF) opposition party.

Police have targeted CUF supporters in their homes, shops and on the streets and attacked CUF branch offices. More than 300 CUF supporters have been beaten by police and more than 100 others arrested, mostly on trumped-up criminal charges such as vagrancy. Police also shot Abdallah Khamis, who is being treated in hospital. Those in police custody are reportedly being refused medical treatment for their injuries.

This follows an incident on 2 April when armed police raiding a CUF office meeting were disarmed and beaten by CUF guards, seriously injuring three of them. The next day, the CUF secretary general, Seif Sharif Hamad (a former Chief Minister of Zanzibar), was arrested as he was leaving a court hearing in the long-running case of 18 CUF officials and supporters charged with treason - charges which Amnesty International believes to be politically motivated and without substance. Seif Sharif Hamad and three others arrested with him were later freed on bond after being charged with criminal offences in connection with his presence at the above incident.

Among those arrested in the subsequent police clamp down, though released several hours later without charge, was Mohamed Dedes, a member of the Inter-Party Commission of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), Party of the Revolution and the CUF, set up to implement the Commonwealth Agreement of April 1999.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Commonwealth Agreement on Zanzibar, aiming to resolve the political crisis arising from the rigging of elections in 1995, now seems to be in jeopardy. Tension is rising, with elections due in October 2000. Zanzibar President Salmin Amour recently failed to gain mainland CCM party support for an unconstitutional third presidential term.

The semi-autonomous Zanzibar government is proceeding with the treason trial of 18 opposition party leaders and supporters, considered by Amnesty International to be prisoners of conscience (see AI report: *Tanzania - Prisoners of Conscience face treason trial in Zanzibar*, AI Index: AFR 56/01/00, January 2000). On 3 April Zanzibar's Deputy Chief Justice, Nigerian judge Garba Tumak, dismissed defence applications and may set a trial date when the court reconvenes on 2 May. European Union countries have expressed concern at the risk of further deterioration of the human rights and democracy situation in Zanzibar.

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

- expressing concern at the widespread arbitrary beatings by police of Civic United Front (CUF) supporters, the arrest of over 100 others on fabricated criminal charges, and the shooting of Abdallah Khamis;

- urging the authorities to stop police ill-treating peaceful citizens, to establish an independent inquiry into the violence and bring to justice police officers responsible for violations of human rights;
- demanding that criminal charges are dropped against people who have been arrested simply because of their non-violent opinions;
- appealing for those held in police custody to be treated humanely and allowed medical treatment, family visits and access to their lawyers;
- calling on the Tanzanian and Zanzibar authorities to ensure that the rights to freedom of opinion and association are respected in Zanzibar by preventing human rights violations which could obstruct the holding of free and fair elections later this year.

APPEALS TO:

President Salmin Amour
Office of the President of Zanzibar
P O Box 2422
Zanzibar, Tanzania

Telegrams: President Salmin Amour, Zanzibar, Tanzania

Faxes: + 25554 233722

Salutation: Your Excellency

President Benjamin Mkapa
President of the United Republic of Tanzania
Office of the President
P O Box 9120
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Telegrams: President Mkapa, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania

Faxes: + 25551 113425

Salutation: Your Excellency

Police Commissioner Khalid
Zanzibar Police Headquarters
P O Box 4220
Zanzibar, Tanzania

Telegrams: Police Commissioner, Zanzibar, Tanzania

Faxes: + 25554 233722 (c/o the Presidents' Office)

Salutation: Dear Commissioner

COPIES TO:

Mr Omar Mahita
Inspector General of Police
Tanzania Police Headquarters
P O Box 9223
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Faxes: + 25551 118334 (c/o Ministry of Home Affairs)

and to diplomatic representatives of TANZANIA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 May 2000.