

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 62/04/99

UA 12/99 Fear of ill-treatment/Prisoners of conscience 18 January 1999

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Adrien Phongo Kunda - Secretary General of main opposition party, the *Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social* (UDPS)
Joseph Mukendi wa Mulumba - aide to head of UDPS, lawyer
Cleophas Kamitatu Masamba - leading member of the *Partie démocrate social chrétien* (PDSC)
Bofassa Djema - a leading member of *Mouvement Populaire de la révolution* (MPR)
Kisimba Ngoy - leading member of the *Partie des nationalistes fédéralistes* (PNF)

The five leading members of prominent opposition parties named above were arrested in Kinshasa, the capital of the DRC, on 16 January 1999. They are now in custody at the *Agence nationale des renseignements*, (ANR), the National Intelligence Agency. None of the five have been charged or been allowed access to legal counsel, and Amnesty International fears that they risk ill-treatment.

The five were arrested after they responded to an "invitation" to come to the ANR. On arrival they were apparently reminded that activities by political parties have been suspended since President Kabila came to power on 17 May 1997. The suspension is not due to be lifted until the end of January 1999. Amnesty International is concerned that the five are being detained solely on account of their non-violent political activities and considers them prisoners of conscience.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The arrests are the most recent of many that have been carried out since President Kabila outlawed the activities of political parties which refused to join forces with the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo* (AFDL) after it came to power in 1997. President Kabila also abolished the country's transitional assembly and rejected the transitional constitution, ending moves towards establishing representative democracy in the DRC.

The head of the UDPS, Etienne Tshisekedi, was arrested in February 1998 by the ANR and later "banished" to his home region without trial. Dozens of members of the UDPS and other political opposition parties have been arrested, detained or harassed since May 1997.

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

- seeking assurances that the five are not being ill-treated;
- explaining that AI considers all five to be prisoners of conscience, detained for the non-violent expression of their beliefs, and calling for their immediate and unconditional release;
- reminding the government of the DRC of its commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular Article 19: "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression".

APPEALS TO:

President Laurent-Désiré KABILA
Président de la République, Présidence de la République
Kinshasa-Ngaliema, Democratic Republic of Congo

Telegrams: Président, Kinshasa, DR Congo

Faxes: + 243 88 02120

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la République / Dear President

Minister for the Interior, M. Gaëtan KAKUDJI

Ministre d'Etat, Ministre

de l'Intérieur

Ministère de l'Interieur

Kinshasa-Gombe, Democratic Republic of Congo

République Démocratique du Congo

Telexes: Ministre Kakudji, Kinshasa, DR Congo

COPIES TO:

Minister for Human Rights, M. Léonard She Okitundu

Ministre des Droits de l'Homme, Kinshasa-Gombe, DR Congo

Telegrams: Ministre Droits de l'Homme, Kinshasa, DR Congo

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

and to diplomatic representatives of Democratic Republic of Congo accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 March 1999.

"Everyone has the right to freedom of expression"

Article 19, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Visit the Amnesty International UDHR campaign website on <http://www.amnesty.excite.com>