

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 112/97

Torture / Fear of torture

13 August 1997

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC) Bertin Lukanda, human rights activist  
Diomba Ramazani, NGO worker

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Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the life of Bertin Lukanda, currently held in a military camp, after receiving reports that a man detained with him is now critically ill in hospital as a result of severe beatings. Bertin Lukanda is the President of the Maniema branch of the *Conseil régional des organisations non-gouvernementales* (CRONG), an umbrella group of national non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Bertin Lukanda was arrested on 6 August 1997 on the beach of the Congo River in Kindu, the main town of DRC's Maniema region, with his colleague Diomba Ramazani. They were preparing to make routine visits to local partner organizations when they were arrested by armed units of the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre* (AFDL), Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaïre, and taken to Lwama military camp in Kindu.

After suffering severe beatings at the military camp, Diomba Ramazani was transferred to Kindu General Hospital after a few days, where he is in a critical condition. It is alleged that soldiers in the camp accused CRONG of spying for a United Nations Commission of Inquiry into allegations of massacres in eastern DRC and of having links with the main opposition party in DRC, the *Union démocratique pour le progrès social* (UDPS), Democratic Union for Social Progress.

Bertin Lukanda is also the head of information for a local independent human rights group based in Kindu, known as *Haki Za Binadamu* (HZB). Other workers for HZB have recently been harassed and prevented from travelling freely in DRC. Since 1 August 1997, *Haki Za Binadamu* has been ordered to cease functioning.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Shortly after the AFDL took power in DRC in May 1997, all opposition political parties including the UDPS were banned or made to join the AFDL. Demonstrations and meetings have also been banned; those that have taken place illegally have been brutally suppressed by members of the armed forces, who have shot dead unarmed demonstrators (see UA 244/97, AFR 62/23/97, 29 July 1997).

Although human rights organizations and NGOs are not officially prohibited from operating, Amnesty International is receiving an increasing number of reports from throughout DRC of the arrest, harassment or beating of workers from such organizations, who are typically accused of being spies. Human rights organizations in particular have been effectively prevented in many areas from independently investigating or reporting on human rights violations perpetrated by members of the AFDL.

The UN Commission of Inquiry is shortly due to arrive in DRC, following weeks of delays and negotiations on terms of reference with the authorities in the country's capital, Kinshasa. The inquiry will investigate allegations of mass human rights abuses by the AFDL, including massacres of large numbers of Rwandese refugees, said to have taken place mainly in eastern DRC since October 1996.

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

- expressing fears for the safety of Bertin Lukanda, following his arrest on 6 August 1997 and allegations of severe beatings whilst in detention at Lwama military camp in Kindu;
- calling for his immediate release if he is not to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence;
- urging that an inquiry be ordered into the beating of Diomba Ramazani and that the perpetrators be brought to justice; reminding the authorities that the DRC is party to the International Convention of Civil and Political Rights, which prohibits the use of torture;
- expressing concern over the harassment of independent human rights workers and others in the non-governmental sector, as well as members of political parties and urging that the government uphold these groups' rights to freedom of expression and association.

**APPEALS TO:**

Head of State

Son Excellence

Laurent-Désiré KABILA

Président de la République

Présidence de la République

Kinshasa-Ngaliema

Democratic Republic of Congo

**Telegrams: President Kabila, Kinshasa, DR Congo**

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

Commandant Anselme Masasu NINDAGA

Chef d'Etat-Major de l'AFDL

Ministère de la Défense

BP 4734

Kinshasa-Gombe

Democratic Republic of Congo

**Telegrams: Commandant Nindaga, Ministère Defense, Kinshasa, Congo**

**Salutation: Monsieur le commandant / Dear Commander**

**COPIES TO:**

Minister of the Interior

M. Mwenze KONGOLO

Ministre de l'Intérieur

Hôtel du Conseil exécutif

Kinshasa-Gombe

Democratic Republic of Congo

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre/Dear Minister Kongolo**

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 15 September 1997.