

AI INDEX: ASA 50/01/95
20 SEPTEMBER 1995

TAHITI (FRENCH POLYNESIA): AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGES IMMEDIATE
INQUIRY INTO ALLEGED ILL-TREATMENT OF ARRESTED TRADE UNIONISTS

An immediate inquiry into reports of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of 16 trade unionists detained this month in the Tahitian capital of Papeete should be initiated, Amnesty International urged today in a letter to the French Minister of Defence and the Attorney General in Papeete.

The detentions on 9 September were carried out by a large group of armed members of the *garde mobile* of the *Gendarmerie nationale* in combat dress, who burst into the headquarters of the *A Tia I Mua* union, affiliated to the *Confédération française démocratique du travail* (CFDT), shortly before a press conference was due to begin.

Some of those present, including the Union's Secretary General, Hiro Tefaarere, claim to have been kicked and punched while in the union headquarters. Henri Temaitahio, a representative of the *Office des Postes et Télécommunications*, reportedly received a truncheon blow to the left temple causing him to lose consciousness.

The detainees, including Cyril Legayic, the Secretary General of the *Confédération des syndicats indépendants de Polynésie* (CSIP), were handcuffed behind their backs and stacked face downwards in a military lorry before their transfer to the *Gendarmerie* barracks in Avenue Bruat.

Henri Temaitahio was released on the evening of 9 September but collapsed at the exit of the *Gendarmerie* barracks. On 11 September he was taken to the *Hôpital Territorial* suffering from a progressive paralysis of the left side.

"According to reports, the detainees were forced to kneel in the parking area of the barracks with their hands still handcuffed behind their backs and their faces to the ground for approximately 45 minutes on arrival," Amnesty International said.

After being questioned by officers, five detainees, including Cyril Legayic, were released without charge. The others were brought before a magistrate. Eight people were remanded in custody and three others released on bail.

Currently, five of the detainees remain under arrest in Nuutania prison in connection with the judicial inquiry into the civil disturbances of 6 September which virtually destroyed the terminus at Faa'a airport.

Amnesty International has requested the Minister of Defence, responsible for the *Gendarmerie nationale*, and the Attorney General respectively to institute immediate administrative and judicial inquiries into these allegations.

ENDS/