

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of Ill-treatment/Legal Concern

5 October 1990

CAMEROON: Abraham Abenyan MBOH
Chrysanthus AGHA
Martina AGBOR

Three people are reported to be held, incommunicado, in connection with the importation of political documents into Cameroon. Amnesty International is concerned that they may be ill-treated while in detention and may be prisoners of conscience, detained for the expression of their non-violent political views, and is calling for them to be released immediately if they are not to be charged and brought to trial promptly and fairly on recognizably criminal charges.

On about 26 September 1990 Martina Agbor, a police officer, was reportedly arrested on her return from Nigeria at the airport in Douala, Cameroon's main economic centre. She was apparently detained because she protested at the arrest at the airport of a Nigerian woman who had been found in possession of documents about the Cameroon Democratic Party (CDP), an opposition group based outside the country. Two men in Douala were subsequently arrested: Abraham Abenyan Mboh, a public relations consultant, and Chrysanthus Agha. The Nigerian woman is believed to have later been released without charge.

The three are reported to be held in the cells of the Brigade Mixte Mobile, the paramilitary police, in Douala. A report has been received that one of them may have been beaten by police. It is not clear under what legislation they are being held. They should have been referred to the procuracy and formally remanded or released within 48 hours of their arrest.

Political parties are in theory allowed to exist under the terms of Cameroon's constitution but are in practice prevented from operating. A former President of the Bar Association and a businessman were sentenced to long prison terms in April 1990 after attending meetings to discuss multi-party democracy and the setting up of a new political party. Although they were released in August 1990 after worldwide protests at their imprisonment, the authorities appear to be still trying to intimidate anybody who challenges the single party system.

Although President Paul Biya publicly announced in April and July 1990 that all political prisoners in Cameroon would soon be released, many of the more than 100 political prisoners held since 1984 in connection with an unsuccessful coup attempt remain in detention. Other political detainees remain in detention for long periods without charge or trial. One such detainee, Isidore Nkiamboh, is alleged to have been held since 1985 when he was arrested after entering Cameroon with documents concerning the CDP.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters, preferably in French or English:

- expressing concern at the detention without charge, apparently on political grounds, of Abraham Abenyan Mboh, Chrysanthus Agha and Martina Agbor, and at reports that one of the detainees has been ill-treated;

- asking to be informed of the reason for their detention and the legislation under which they are detained;

- appealing for them to be safeguarded from any ill-treatment while they are in police custody and given immediate access to their families and lawyers;

- expressing Amnesty International's concern that they may be prisoners of conscience and appealing for them to be released immediately if they are not to be charged and brought to trial promptly and fairly on recognizably criminal charges.

APPEALS TO:

Son Excellence
Monsieur Paul Biya
Président de la République
Palais de la Présidence
1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon

Telegrams: President Biya, Yaounde, Cameroon
Telexes: 8207 PRESID KN or 8230 PRESID2 KN

M. Gilbert Andzé Tsoungui
Ministre de l'Administration territoriale
Ministère de l'Administration territoriale
1000 Yaoundé 4, Cameroon

Telegrams: Ministre Tsoungui, Yaounde, Cameroon
Telexes: 8503 MINAT KN; 8268 MINAT KN

M. Laurent Essoh
Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
1000 Yaoundé 4, Cameroon

Telexes: 8566 MINJUSTI KN
Telegrams: Ministre Justice Essoh, Yaounde, Cameroon

COPIES TO: One or more of the following:

M. Ferdinand-Léopold Oyono
Ministre des Affaires étrangères
Ministère des Affaires étrangères
1000 Yaoundé 4, Cameroon

- Le Messager, BP 5925, Douala, Cameroon
- La Gazette, BP 5485, Douala, Cameroon
- Cameroon Tribune, BP 1218, Yaoundé, Cameroon

and to diplomatic representatives of Cameroon in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 November 1990.