

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal Concern/Torture

26 April 1991

UGANDA:

Michael Alip Atepu - member of national assembly  
Omara Atubo - member of national assembly  
Irene Apiu Laju - member of national assembly, (f)  
Okodi Levi - member of national assembly  
Zachary Olum - member of national assembly

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The five members of parliament named above, who represent constituencies in Kitgum, Gulu and Lira Districts in northern Uganda, are among several hundred people arrested since 30 March 1991. Omara Atubo, Zachary Olum and Irene Apiu Laju were arrested in Kampala on 15 April 1991. They are reported to have been arrested followed a visit to northern Uganda where they complained to the military authorities about allegations of arbitrary arrests, beatings, rapes and extrajudicial executions during on-going military counter-insurgency operations in Gulu, Kitgum, Lira and Apac Districts. They are believed to have been taken back to Lira, in northern Uganda, where they remain in military custody without charge or trial.

Michael Alip Atepu and Okodi Levi, who are both from Lira, were arrested shortly after 30 March 1991 in Lira District. Okodi Levi is reported to be under house arrest but Michael Alip Atepu is thought to be in military custody. Neither has been charged or tried. It is reported that complaints they made about army conduct in the course of arrests and interrogations to locate armed rebels, which began in late March, led to their arrest.

Amnesty International regards all five as possible prisoners of conscience, detained without charge or trial while reportedly attempting to fulfil their role as elected political representatives. It is unclear whether they were subject to complete immunity from arrest as members of parliament, but it does not seem that parliament was consulted about whether immunity should be waived.

Several hundred other people have been detained without charge or trial during the army operations in Lira and Apac Districts. Many are believed to have been taken, at least initially, to the army barracks in Lira but it is thought that some have since been transferred to other places of military detention.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Uganda Government has been facing armed insurgency in the north and east of the country since late 1986. There have been mass arrests, which have frequently led to people being imprisoned without charge or trial for several years, and many incidents where the army has been responsible for the extrajudicial execution of prisoners and unarmed civilians. In addition to the arrests mentioned above, there have been reports of hundreds of detentions and incidents of extrajudicial execution and soldiers raping prisoners in Gulu and Kitgum Districts.

#### RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at the detention without charge or trial of possible

prisoners of conscience Omara Atubo, Zachary Olum, Irene Apiu Laju, Michael Alip Atepu and Okodi Levi, who are reported to have been arrested while taking up the cases of people in their constituencies who were alleged to have been victims of human rights violations;

- expressing concern that they are held incommunicado in military custody and urging that they be referred promptly to a judicial authority and that they be allowed visits by relatives and legal representatives;

- urging that unless they are to be charged with recognisably criminal offenses and brought promptly to trial, Omara Atubo, Zachary Olum, Irene Apiu Laju, Michael Alip Atepu and Okodi Levi and all other detainees be immediately released.

**APPEALS TO:**

President Yoweri Museveni  
President of the Republic  
Office of the President  
Parliament Buildings  
PO Box 7168  
Kampala, Uganda

**Telegrams:** President Museveni, State House  
Entebbe, Uganda

**Faxes:** 256 41 235462

**Telexes:** 61048 KAPITAL; 61006 VICTORIA

Mr George Cosmas Adyebo  
Prime Minister  
Office of the Prime Minister  
PO Box 341  
Kampala, Uganda

**Telegrams:** Prime Minister Adyebo, Kampala, Uganda

**Telexes:** 62001

General David Tinyefunza  
Minister of State for Defence  
Ministry of Defence  
PO Box 3798  
Kampala, Uganda

**Telegrams:** Defence Minister Tinyefunza, Kampala, Uganda

**Telexes:** 61023

**COPIES TO:**

Prof George Kanyeihamba  
Minister of Justice and Attorney General  
Ministry of Justice  
PO Box 7183  
Kampala, Uganda

and to diplomatic representatives of Uganda in your country

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 7 June 1991.