

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AFR 59/12/90

Distr: UA/SC

UA 359/90

Legal Concern/Torture

11 September 1990

UGANDA:

Peter EKUSAI, UPC official (Publications)

Abel OLERO, UPC official (Political Affairs)

Max OPII, UPC official (office superintendant)

Levi ODONGO, businessman

One other, name unknown

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Amnesty International is concerned about the reported arrest on 30 August 1990 of Peter Ekusai, Abel Olero and Max Opii, three Uganda People's Congress (UPC) officials, Levi Odongo, a businessman, and an unidentified man at the UPC party head office at Uganda House in Kampala. During the incident the security officers who carried out the arrests reportedly removed a number of UPC T-shirts, portraits, publications and documents from the office. The reasons for their arrest and their exact whereabouts have not been made known. It is believed that the five men may be in incommunicado detention where Amnesty International fears that they may be in danger of ill-treatment or torture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Under the present government, prisoners arrested for political reasons have been held by the army for long periods without charge or trial, sometimes for a year or more. They have usually been detained in military barracks, prohibited from receiving regular visits and sometimes subjected to beatings or torture during interrogations.

Another UPC official, Charles Kagenda-Atwooki, Professor of Geography at Makerere University and Publicity Secretary of the UPC was arrested on 10 December 1987 by officers of the police Special Branch shortly after he had given an interview to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in which he criticized aspects of the National Resistance Army's (NRA) human rights record. He was held incommunicado for some weeks at military intelligence headquarters in Kampala, where he is believed to have been tortured. He was eventually brought to court in March 1988 where he was charged with engaging in an act of terrorism and unlawfully possessing seditious publications. The more serious terrorism charge was later dropped and in September 1988 he was granted bail and was released a few weeks later.

Amnesty International is concerned that Peter Ekusai, Abel Olero, Mark Opii, Levy Odongo and the unidentified man may have been imprisoned on account of their non-violent political beliefs and that their secret detention puts them in danger of torture and other forms of ill-treatment. The organization is urging the Ugandan Government to release the five men if they are not be charged with an offence of a recognizably criminal nature and brought promptly to trial.

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

- seeking clarification for the reasons for the arrests of the five men and the legal basis of their detentions;

- asking where they are being detained and seeking assurances that they are being humanely treated and that they are permitted to receive visits from

their lawyers, doctors and families;

- urging the government to ensure that the detainees are not held in incommunicado or secret detention where they might be in danger of torture or ill-treatment;

- urging that they be released if they are not to be charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought promptly to trial.

APPEALS TO:

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

Telexes: 61007 ADMINISTRER
Marked for the attention
of the Minister of Justice
Telegrams: Ministry of Justice,
Kampala, Uganda

Mr Ibrahim Mukiibi
Minister of Internal Affairs
Ministry of Internal Affairs
PO Box 7191
Kampala, Uganda

Telexes: 61331
Telegrams: Ministry of Internal
Affairs, Kampala, Uganda

COPIES TO:

Dr Paul Ssemogerere
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PO Box 7048
Kampala, Uganda

Mr Amama Mbabazi
Director of External Security
Office of the President
Parliamentary Buildings
PO Box 7168
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 10 October 1990.