

WORLDWIDE APPEALS

February 1999

FINAL TEXT

MALAYSIA – prisoner of conscience

Amnesty international believes that Dr Munawar Anees has been imprisoned as part of the Malaysian authorities' campaign against supporters of prisoner of conscience Anwar Ibrahim, the former Deputy Prime Minister.

Dr Munawar Anees, a Pakistan national and former speech-writer for Anwar Ibrahim, was arrested at his house in Kuala Lumpur on 14 September 1998. He was taken to a secret detention centre where he was reportedly punched, humiliated, deprived of sleep and forced to confess to a homosexual relationship with Anwar Ibrahim. He was also denied adequate medical attention for a serious heart complaint.

He was held incommunicado under the draconian Internal Security Act, which allows for detention without charge or trial.

On 19 September 1998, Dr Munawar Anees was sentenced to six months' imprisonment on the basis of his confession. He was represented by a police-appointed lawyer who entered a guilty plea.

Dr Munawar Anees has denied the charges and is now appealing against his conviction on the basis that his plea was not made voluntarily.

AI believes that the charges laid against Dr Munawar Anees were politically motivated, and considers him a prisoner of conscience on this basis. Whatever the circumstances, however, AI would consider anyone imprisoned solely for homosexual acts between consenting adults in private to be a prisoner of conscience.

Please write, calling for Dr Munawar Anees' immediate and unconditional release, to: Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs, Jalan Dato' Onn, 50502 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. (Faxes: 60 3 238 3784).

Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

GUATEMALA – extrajudicial execution

Nearly a year after the murder of Bishop Juan Gerardi Conedera, those responsible have still to be brought to justice.

Bishop Gerardi was battered to death with a piece of paving stone in Guatemala City on 26 April 1998. The 76-year-old director of the Archbishop's human rights office was killed only days after launching a report by the Guatemalan Catholic Church's Recuperation of Historical Memory Project. The report was based on a three-year study of more than 55,000 human rights abuses reportedly perpetrated during the 36-year Guatemalan civil conflict, and concluded that around 79 per cent of the abuses had been carried out by the security forces. AI fears that Bishop Gerardi was murdered by agents of these official forces.

In the face of all the evidence, the authorities have refused to acknowledge that Bishop Gerardi's killing may have been politically motivated. The official investigation into his death considers the murder to be either a common crime or a crime of passion. In a report released on behalf of the Guatemalan Catholic Church in November 1998, former Attorney General Acisclo Valladares concluded that Bishop Gerardi's murder had all the hallmarks of an extrajudicial execution. The report also stated that the priest held in connection with the murder had been wrongfully accused.

Please write, urging a full, independent and impartial investigation into allegations that military or former military personnel were involved in the April 1998 murder of Bishop Juan Gerardi Conedera. Call for those responsible to be brought to justice. Send your letters to: S.E. Álvaro Arzú Irigoyen, Presidente de la República de Guatemala, Palacio Nacional, 6ª Calle y 7ª Avenida, Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala. (Faxes: 502 221 4537).

E-mails: alvaroarzu@guate.net / alvaroarzu@guateconnect.com

Salutation: Dear President

CAMEROON – prisoner of conscience

Nana Koulagna, a former member of the National Assembly in Cameroon, has been detained without charge or trial in Garoua Central Prison, northern Cameroon, since May 1997. He is perceived as a political opponent by the lamido of Rey Bouba, a traditional ruler in his local area.

Prior to parliamentary elections in May 1997 Nana Koulagna conducted an election campaign in Mayo-Rey Division, North Province, on behalf of the Union nationale pour la démocratie et le progrès (UNDP). On 12 May 1997 he and other UNDP members were attacked by the private militia of the lamido of Rey Bouba. Two UNDP members and three members of the militia reportedly died in the confrontation. While no member of the private militia was arrested, the following day Nana Koulagna and 15 other UNDP members and supporters were detained. All but Nana Koulagna were subsequently freed. Although the judicial authorities in Garoua later ordered Nana Koulagna's release without charge, he remains in detention apparently as a result of influence exerted by the lamido of Rey Bouba.

AI believes that Nana Koulagna was arrested and imprisoned solely on account of his legitimate and peaceful political activities. There is a persistent pattern of intimidation, physical assault, illegal detention and torture of political opponents by traditional rulers in northern Cameroon, who often act with the tacit approval of the authorities. No official investigation of allegations of human rights abuses committed by traditional leaders and their private militias has taken place.

Please write, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Nana Koulagna and urging that an independent inquiry be established to investigate allegations of human rights abuses by traditional rulers and their private forces. Send letters to: President Paul Biya, Président de la République, Palais de l'Unité, 1000 Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Salutation: Dear President Biya