

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 188/93 Extrajudicial execution/Fear of extrajudicial execution

14 June 1993

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR): Demonstrators and others including:
Hermine Yakite (female) aged 32

Amnesty International is concerned at the continued use of excessive force and lethal weapons against demonstrators by the CAR security forces and fears there is an immediate threat of further killings if such excessive use of force is not curbed. The period up to the elections which are scheduled for August 1993 is likely to be particularly tense with further demonstrations taking place.

For several years the Central African Republic has experienced social unrest linked to economic difficulties. The main trade unions have been on strike since 26 April 1993 to back their demand for the payment of several months of salary arrears. On that same day at least two people, including a student, were killed and more than 30 were injured when police and demonstrators clashed. The demonstrators were protesting at non-payment of salaries to government workers and against the closure of schools and non-payment of teachers for many months. Students have been unable to sit for examinations for several years.

On 15 May soldiers of the Garde Présidentielle, Presidential Guard, which is responsible to President André Kolingba, surrounded the presidential palace and occupied the government-owned radio station in Bangui for several hours demanding the payment of their salary arrears. The soldiers broadcast a threat to free Jean Bedel Bokassa, the former head of state who is serving a prison sentence. They reportedly said their actions were not political and they returned to barracks after being promised payment of their salaries. In the course of these events, soldiers of the Garde Présidentielle tried to commandeer the car of a pregnant woman, Hermine Yakite, and when she resisted she was shot dead. Hermine Yakite was a laboratory technician at Bangui Central Hospital and had been on her way to hospital to give birth. Doctors succeeded in delivering her child but he died shortly afterwards. A midwife who was also in the car escaped unhurt. Hermine Yakite's family lodged a complaint over the killing but the government has not opened an inquiry into the shooting.

On 19 May 1993, another army unit mutinied to demand pay. No killings were reported.

On 4 June 1993, a march by women protesting against pay arrears, school closures and lack of health facilities took place despite being banned by the authorities. Alphonse Gombani, Minister of Public Security, was quoted as saying demonstrators would be dealt with seriously if they defied the ban. Members of the security forces used sticks and leather whips to disperse the demonstrators. According to reports, the security forces also opened fire on the demonstrators. One man is

reported to have died and at least two demonstrators required hospital treatment.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Central African Republic was a one-party state from 1986 until 1991, when strikes by trade unions forced the government to lift a ban on opposition parties in October 1991. President André Kolingba allowed presidential elections for the first time in 1992 and was declared the winner. However the Supreme Court annulled the results saying there had been cheating, intimidation and acts of aggression during the voting. Foreign pressure and opposition demands have forced presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled for October 1993 to be brought forward to early August.

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RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in French, Arabic, English or in your own language:

- expressing concern at the continued use of excessive force and lethal weapons by the security forces and the Garde Présidentielle against demonstrators and others;

- expressing concern at the killing of Hermine Yakite and the consequent death of her baby and urging the authorities to open an independent and impartial investigation into her killing and to bring those responsible to justice;

- urging the authorities to take immediate steps to prevent further killings and to curb persistent use of lethal weapons by the security forces against unarmed civilians and to make them accountable for their actions;

- requesting the authorities to establish strict guidelines for the use of force in policing unlawful assemblies, respecting in particular the principle adopted by the United Nations that, "in the dispersal of assemblies that are unlawful, but non-violent, law enforcement officials shall avoid the use of force or, where that is not practicable, shall restrict such force to the minimum extent necessary". (Quote from Article 13 of Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.)

APPEALS TO:

1) President:

Son Excellence
Général d'Armée André Kolingba
Président de la République
Palais de la Renaissance
Bangui, République centrafricaine

Salutation: Monsieur le Président de la
République /
Dear President

Telegrams: President Kolingba, Bangui, RCA

Telexes: 5253

2) Prime Minister:

Monsieur Enoch-Derant Lakoue
Premier Ministre et Chef
du Gouvernement

Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre /
Dear Prime Minister

Palais de la Renaissance
Bangui, République centrafricaine

Telegrams: Premier Ministre Malendoma, Bangui, RCA

Telexes: 5253

3) Minister of Defence:

Monsieur Raymond Mbitokon
Ministre de la Défense
Présidence de la République
Palais de la Renaissance
Bangui, République centrafricaine

Salutation: Monsieur le Conseiller /
Dear Minister

Telegrams: Ministre Mbitoko, Bangui, RCA

Telexes: 5298 MINDICA RC, 5293 JUSTICE RC

COPIES OF APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of the Interior:

Monsieur Alphonse Gombadi
Ministre de la Sécurité publique et de
l'Administration du territoire
Ministère de la Sécurité publique
Bangui
République centrafricaine

2) Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Monsieur Jean-Marie Bassia
Ministre des Affaires étrangères
Ministère des Affaires étrangères
BP 936
Bangui
République centrafricaine

3) Minister of Justice:

Monsieur Jacques Bosso
Ministre de la Justice et Garde des Sceaux
Ministère de la Justice
Bangui, République centrafricaine

and to diplomatic representative of CAR accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 July 1993.