

EXTERNAL

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UA 152/96 Medical concern / Possible prisoner of conscience 25 June 1996

CONGO

Colonel BUISSA MATOKO

Colonel Buissa Matoko, who suffers from diabetes and hypertension, has reportedly been denied access to doctors since his arrest on 9 May 1996, raising serious concern for his health. He is also reported to have been denied access to a lawyer.

Colonel Buissa Matoko, a former close associate of the former Congolese President Denis Sassou-Nguesso, was arrested at Brazzaville Airport. He was detained at the *commisariat de police* at the airport for two weeks, and then apparently transferred to prison. He has not been officially charged with any offence. Amnesty International is concerned that his detention may be connected to his relationship with the former president.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Congo returned to multi-party rule in 1992, after many years of one-party rule by the Congolese Labour Party under former President Denis Sassou-Nguesso. Following disputed election results in 1993, there was fierce fighting in the capital Brazzaville between militias loyal to rival party leaders. This was ended in January 1994 by an agreement between the rival leaders. New elections are scheduled for August 1997.

Four trade unionists who protested against the government's reportedly unpopular privatisation programme, and organised strikes against it, were arrested, tried, convicted of "interfering with the right to work", and imprisoned in February 1996. They were reportedly released in May.

Prison conditions in Congo are believed to be poor. Starvation and medical neglect, resulting in deaths in custody, were reported in Brazzaville Central Prison in 1995.

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

- expressing concern for the health of Colonel Buissa Matoko, who suffers from diabetes and hypertension;
- seeking assurances that he is being granted access to all appropriate medical care and to a lawyer of his choosing;
- seeking clarification of the grounds for his continued detention, and calling for his immediate and unconditional release unless he is to be promptly charged with a recognisable criminal offence and given a fair trial in accordance with international standards of fairness.

APPEALS TO:

Son Excellence
Monsieur Pascal LISSOUBA
Président de la République
Présidence de la République
B.P. 2006, BRAZZAVILLE, République du Congo
Telegrams: President Lissouba, Brazzaville, Congo
Faxes: +242 835067
Telexes: 5210 KG, 5287 KG, 5519 KG
Salutation: Votre Excellence / Your Excellency

Général Jacques-Joachim YHOMBY-OPANGO
Premier Ministre et chef du gouvernement,
Président du Comité des priorités
Bureau du Premier Ministre
BP 2096, BRAZZAVILLE, République du Congo
Telegrams: Premier Ministre, Brazzaville, Congo
Salutation: Monsieur le Premier Ministre / Dear Prime Minister

Monsieur Phillipe BIKINKITA
Ministre de l'Intérieur, chargé de la sécurité, du développement urbain
Ministère de l'Intérieur
BRAZZAVILLE, République du Congo
Telegrams: Ministre de l'Interieur, Brazzaville, Congo
Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Colonel Jean Michel EBAKA
Inspecteur général de la police
Ministère de la Défense
BRAZZAVILLE, République du Congo
Telegrams: Inspecteur general de la police, Brazzaville, Congo
Salutation: Monsieur l'Inspecteur général / Dear Inspector General

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of CONGO accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 12 August 1996.