

Public

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To: Health professionals
From: Medical team / Africa program
Date: 10 September 2002

MEDICAL ACTION
Ill-health of Hassan Bility
Journalist and human rights defender, Liberia

Key words ill-health / incommunicado detention

Amnesty International's concerns

Amnesty International is concerned for the health of Hassan Bility, a Liberian journalist and human rights defender, who has been detained at an unknown location in the capital, Monrovia, since 24 June 2002. Before his arrest he was already suffering from malaria and needs access to medical treatment urgently.

In a letter sent to a contact on 20 July, Hassan Bility indicated that his health was deteriorating and that he did not have access to medical care. The government has granted permission to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit him, but under conditions which are unacceptable to the ICRC (Amnesty International was unable to obtain more information on this due to the confidentiality of ICRC's work).

Background information

Hassan Bility was harassed and arrested in Monrovia on 24 June 2002 by men in plain clothes. Hassan Bility belongs to the Mandingo ethnic group, whose members are frequently subjected to human rights violations by the government. During the Liberian civil war (1989 – 1996), the warring faction confronting the then government was comprised mainly of people of Mandingo ethnic origin. Since then, the government has indiscriminately associated members of the Mandingo group with armed opposition groups. The Liberian government has accused Hassan Bility of being an "illegal combatant" and being involved in a plot to assassinate the president.

Hassan Bility has been detained twice in the past. The *Analyst* newspaper, of which he is the editor, has been closed down by the government twice as a result of writing and publishing articles deemed critical of the government.

The Liberian government's treatment of Hassan Bility has already been publicly condemned by civil society in Liberia and other West African countries, by the European Union, the US government and numerous international non-governmental organizations.

Recommended actions & addresses

Please write letters in English to the authorities below, using professionally-headed paper if you use this in your profession:

- Introducing yourself in your professional capacity;
- Expressing concern about the detention without charge of Hassan Bility at an unknown location;
- Urging the authorities to reveal his whereabouts and to release him unless charged with a recognisable criminal offence;

- Expressing concern at reports of his ill-health; seek information about his diagnosis and current treatment;
- Urging that he is given immediate access to family, lawyers and appropriate medical care, in accordance with internationally agreed standards such as the *Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*.

Addresses

President of the Republic of Liberia

His Excellency Mr Charles Taylor
 Office of the President
 Executive Mansion
 PO Box 9001, Capitol Hill
 Monrovia, Republic of Liberia
 Fax: + 231 226 544 / 228 026 (if someone answers, ask for a fax tone)
 Salutation: Dear President Taylor

Director of Police

Paul Mulbah
 National Police Force
 National Police Headquarters
 Monrovia, Republic of Liberia
 Fax: + 231 226 785
 Salutation: Dear Mr Mulbah

Minister of Justice

Counsellor L. Kobo Johnson
 Minister of Justice
 Ministry of Justice
 Ashmun St, PO Box 9006
 Monrovia, Republic of Liberia
 Fax: + 231 227 872
 Salutation: Dear Mr Varmah

Copies to:

EU representative in Liberia

Fax: + 231 226 274

American Embassy in Liberia

Ambassador John Blaney
 111 United Nations Drive
 Monrovia, Liberia
 Fax: + 231 226 148/49

and to diplomatic representatives of Liberia accredited to your country.

If you receive no reply from the government or other recipients within two months of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow up letter seeking a response, referring to your previous letter(s). Please check with the medical team if you are sending appeals after 30 October 2002, and send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat (att: medical team).

Monitoring of action

If you have access to e-mail you can help our attempt to monitor letter-writing actions. Please write in the subject line of your e-mail the index number of the action and the number of letters you write e.g. AFR

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Please send your message to medical@amnesty.org Thank you.