

UA 244/99 Fear of arrest of prisoners of conscience / Possible death penalty 17 September 1999

TANZANIA Seif Sharif Hamad, deputy chair of the Zanzibar opposition Civic United Front (CUF) party
Shaban Mloo, secretary general of CUF
Mohamed Juma Khatib, CUF member of the Tanzanian parliament
Mussa Haji Kombo, CUF member of the Zanzibar parliament
Maulid Makame, Juma Othman, Juma Ngwali, Khatib Hassan - members of the CUF central committee
Nassor Suleiman, Salim Yusuf Mohamed - CUF members

Amnesty International is concerned that these 10 senior Zanzibar opposition party members may be arrested and face the death penalty on fabricated charges of treason.

On 16 September 1999, Zanzibar's Attorney General issued warrants for the arrest on treason charges of ten members of the Civic United Front (CUF) party. If arrested, they would join in prison in Zanzibar 18 other CUF members detained on the same charges since late 1997 and early 1998. Tanzanian officials recently said the long-delayed treason trial would start soon, although no date has been set.

The Attorney General has only named Seif Sharif Hamad and Shaban Mloo for arrest but Amnesty International has learnt that charges have also been drafted against the eight others named above.

Amnesty International is concerned that the trial will not meet international standards for fair trial and that the death penalty is mandatory for those convicted of treason.

The organization believes the charges are politically motivated and aimed at silencing peaceful opposition to the Zanzibar government. If Seif Sharif Hamad and the other nine are arrested, Amnesty International would consider them to be prisoners of conscience imprisoned on account of their non-violent opinions and political activities.

Seif Sharif Hamad, a former Chief Minister of Zanzibar, was a prisoner of conscience from 1991 to 1993, when he was detained on a charge of illegal possession of government documents but released without being tried.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The organization has repeatedly called for the release of the 18 CUF members currently detained without trial as prisoners of conscience and believes that the charges against them of plotting to violently overthrow Zanzibar's President Salmin Amour have been fabricated. The group includes four elected members of the Zanzibar House of Representatives (parliament), two women, and several senior civil servants.

In 1995 the CUF members of Zanzibar's parliament started a boycott of parliamentary sessions in protest at the rigging of the elections. In June 1999, when the CUF signed an agreement to end the boycott with the Zanzibar branch of Tanzania's ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), Party of the Revolution, it was widely expected that the release of the 18 CUF prisoners would speedily follow. However, this has not happened.

Since the 1995 elections, western governments have refused to recognize Salmin Amour's government in Zanzibar and have cut off aid to this semi-autonomous part of Tanzania. The Tanzanian government has frequently failed to act against human rights violations in Zanzibar against members of the CUF opposition party, including widespread arbitrary arrests, unfair trials and torture. However, the human rights situation in Zanzibar has been generally improving in the past year, with the exception of the treason trial situation.

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

- expressing concern that arrest warrants were issued on 16 September 1999 against 10 senior officials of the Civic United Front party, including Seif Sharif Hamad and Shaban Mloo, on charges of treason which carries a mandatory death sentence;
- expressing concern that they will not be tried according to international standards of fair trial;
- stating that, if they are imprisoned, you would consider them to be prisoners of conscience, imprisoned solely for their non-violent opinions and peaceful political opposition;
- appealing for the release of 18 other CUF officials and supporters who have been imprisoned in Zanzibar as prisoners of conscience since late 1997 and early 1997 on charges of treason.

APPEALS TO:

President of Tanzania

His Excellency Benjamin Mkapa
 President of the United Republic of Tanzania
 Office of the President
 P O Box 9120
 Dar es Salaam
 Tanzania

Telegrams: President Mkapa, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Faxes: + 25551 113425

Salutation: Dear President

President of Zanzibar

His Excellency Dr Salmin Amour
 President of Zanzibar
 P O Box 776
 Zanzibar
 Tanzania

Telegrams: President Salmin Amour, Zanzibar, Tanzania

Faxes: + 2554 233722

Salutation: Dear President

Zanzibar Attorney General

Mr Ali Mohamed Omar
 Attorney General of Zanzibar
 Attorney General's Chambers
 P O Box 259
 Zanzibar
 Tanzania

Telegrams: Attorney General, Zanzibar, Tanzania

Faxes: + 25554 233722

Salutation: Dear Attorney General

COPIES TO:

Mr Jakaya Kikwete
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
P O Box 9000
Dar es Salaam
Tanzania
Faxes: +25551 116600

Mr Hamid Mahmoud Hamid
Chief Justice of Zanzibar
Office of the Chief Justice
P O Box 259
Zanzibar
Tanzania

and to diplomatic representatives of TANZANIA accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 28 October 1999.