

JUNE 15, 1990

CAMEROON

GOVERNMENT CRACKS DOWN ON DEMANDS FOR MULTIPARTY SYSTEM:

SEVEN KILLED; JOURNALISTS AND STUDENTS ARRESTED; "DOUALA TEN" TRIED

At a time of growing demands for democratization throughout West Africa, the government of President Paul Biya is conducting a crackdown against those calling for a multiparty system in Cameroon. The government's campaign began with the arrest in February of ten prominent citizens -- later dubbed "the Douala Ten" -- who tried to form an alternative political party, and has culminated thus far in the killing of seven people at a rally for a new political party on May 26. In addition, a number of journalists who reported on the debate about the one-party system have been detained, and lawyers who helped defend "the Douala Ten" have been harassed; one was killed by police under suspicious circumstances.

Africa Watch is very concerned about the government's efforts to silence those demanding an end to one-party rule, and calls on the government of

citizens.

SEVEN KILLED AT RALLY FOR NEW POLITICAL PARTY

On Saturday, May 26, at least seven people were killed in clashes between demonstrators and security forces at a rally in support of a newly-formed political party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF). Reports indicate that several thousand people gathered in Bamenda, in the northwestern part of the country, to take part in the rally that had been announced earlier in the month, despite government warnings that the meeting would be considered illegal. In anticipation of the rally, government troops were sent to the Bamenda area in the preceding days, and roadblocks were set up.

Cameroon to adhere to internationally-accepted human rights standards. Recent developments in Cameroon raise serious questions about the Biya government's respect for the human rights of its

ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNMENT RADIO, THE DEMONSTRATORS WERE TRAMPLED TO DEATH; HOWEVER, RELIABLE REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE SECURITY FORCES FIRED TEAR GAS AND LIVE AMMUNITION AT THE CROWD. FIGHTING BETWEEN THE SECURITY FORCES AND SDF SUPPORTERS APPARENTLY CONTINUED INTO THE NIGHT.

ON MARCH 16, THE SDF HAD APPLIED FOR OFFICIAL RECOGNITION AS A POLITICAL PARTY. THE SDF LEADERS ANNOUNCED THAT IF THEY RECEIVED NO RESPONSE FROM THE GOVERNMENT WITHIN TWO MONTHS, THEY WOULD CONSIDER THEMSELVES LEGALLY CONSTITUTED AS A POLITICAL PARTY. AS OF MAY 16, THE SDF APPLICATION REMAINED UNANSWERED.

THEORETICALLY, POLITICAL PLURALISM IS PERMITTED IN CAMEROON. ARTICLE 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION STATES:

"(1) POLITICAL PARTIES AND GROUPS MAY TAKE PART IN ELECTIONS. THEY SHALL BE FORMED AND SHALL EXERCISE THEIR ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAW.

(2) SUCH PARTIES SHALL BE BOUND TO RESPECT THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY AND OF NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND UNITY."

IN REALITY, HOWEVER, CAMEROON IS A ONE-PARTY STATE CONTROLLED BY THE RASSEMBLEMENT DEMOCRATIQUE DU PEUPLE CAMEROUNAIS (RDPC)/CAMEROON PEOPLES' DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (CPDM), UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF PAUL BIYA. IN 1992, BIYA WAS HANDED THE PRESIDENCY BY

THE *CAMEROON POST* WAS BANNED IN MID-MAY WITHOUT EXPLANATION. PRIOR TO THE REPORTED BANNING, THE PAPER HAD PUBLISHED AN INTERVIEW WITH NI JOHN FRU NDI, THE HEAD OF THE SDF; A LETTER BY ALBERT MUKONG, A WRITER WHO WAS RECENTLY TRIED AND ACQUITTED AS PART OF THE "DOUALA TEN" (SEE BELOW); AND A REPORT ON THE DETENTION OF TEN JOURNALISTS WITH CAMEROON RADIO AND TELEVISION (SEE BELOW).

PRESIDENT AHMADOU AHIDJO, CAMEROON'S PRESIDENT SINCE INDEPENDENCE IN 1960. AHIDJO'S PARTY, THE UNION NATIONALE CAMEROUNAISE (UNC), WAS THE RDPC'S PRECURSOR. THERE HAVE BEEN NO RECENT EFFORTS TO GAIN RECOGNITION FOR ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL PARTIES IN CAMEROON, SINCE ATTEMPTS BY THE UNION DES POPULATIONS CAMEROUNAIS (UPC), THE BANNED OPPOSITION GROUP, WERE REBUFFED IN 1985.

JOURNALISTS ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH SDF RALLY

ON MAY 25, PADDY MBAWA, THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE *CAMEROON POST*, WAS DETAINED FOR BEING IN POSSESSION OF AN SDF PRESS RELEASE ABOUT THE PLANNED RALLY ON MAY 25. JEROME GWELLEN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *CAMEROON OUTLOOK*, WAS DETAINED ON MAY 27 FOR POSSESSING THE SAME PRESS RELEASE. GWELLEN WAS RELEASED ON JUNE 1; MBAWA WAS RELEASED ON JUNE 6.

ON MAY 26, PIUS NJAWA, THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *LE MESSENGER*, WAS DETAINED IN BAMELGA WHILE HE WAS COVERING THE SDF RALLY. HE WAS HELD FOR ABOUT AN HOUR BEFORE BEING RELEASED.

TWO ISSUES OF *LE MESSENGER* — APRIL 24 AND MAY 22 — WERE BANNED: THE FIRST BANNING APPARENTLY RELATED TO AN ARTICLE ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR A MULTIPARTY SYSTEM IN CAMEROON; THE SECOND RELATED TO AN ARTICLE ABOUT THE AMNESTY FOR THOSE POLITICAL PRISONERS WHO HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN THE 1984 COUP ATTEMPT (SEE BELOW), AND ANOTHER ARTICLE ABOUT THE DETENTION OF TEN CAMEROON RADIO AND TELEVISION JOURNALISTS (SEE BELOW).

STUDENTS ARRESTED AT SDF RALLY

ALSO ON MAY 26, STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE HELD A RALLY IN SUPPORT OF THE SDF. INFORMATION INDICATES THAT SOME 3,000 STUDENTS TOOK PART IN THE DEMONSTRATION, AND APPROXIMATELY 200-300 WERE ARRESTED. ALTHOUGH MANY WERE RELEASED

AFTER A SHORT PERIOD, AFRICA WATCH HAS BEEN UNABLE TO CONFIRM THAT ALL HAVE BEEN RELEASED.

"THE DOUALA TEN": POLITICAL TRIAL FOR EFFORTS TO FORM ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL PARTY

FROM MARCH 30 TO APRIL 5, TEN CAMEROONIANS WENT ON TRIAL (PLUS ONE WHO WAS TRIED IN ABSENTIA) ON CHARGES OF "SUBVERSION," UNDER ORDINANCE NO. 62-OF-18 OF MARCH 12, 1962, APPARENTLY FOR THEIR EFFORTS TO FORM AN ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL PARTY. THREE OF THEM WERE SENTENCED TO PRISON TERMS: YONDO BLACK, A LAWYER AND FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE CAMEROON BAR ASSOCIATION, RECEIVED THREE YEARS; ANICET EKANE, A COMPANY DIRECTOR, FOUR YEARS; AND JEAN-MICHEL TEKAM (TRIED IN ABSENTIA), FIVE YEARS. EKANE WAS ALSO CONVICTED OF "INSULTING THE PRESIDENT," UNDER ARTICLE 153 OF THE PENAL CODE. TWO-YEAR SUSPENDED SENTENCES WERE GIVEN TO CHARLES RENE DJON DJON AND RODOLPHE BWANGA, AND THE REST WERE ACQUITTED (ALBERT MUKONG, HENRIETTE EKWE, GABRIEL HAMANI, FRANCIS KWA MOUTOME, VINCENT FEKOM AND JULIENNE BADJE).

ON MARCH 13, THE GOVERNMENT RELEASED A YONDO BLACK, A PROMINENT LAWYER, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE CAMEROON BAR ASSOCIATION AND MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN LAWYERS, WAS ARRESTED BY THE SECURITY POLICE (THE CENTRE NATIONAL D'ETUDE ET DE RECHERCHES -- CENER) ON FEBRUARY 19. AFTER A SEARCH OF HIS OFFICE, WHICH SOME CONSIDERED TO HAVE BEEN ILLEGAL, DOCUMENTS RELATING TO A NEW POLITICAL PARTY WERE TAKEN. THERE IS ALSO SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT BLACK'S HEALTH; HE HAS SUFFERED CARDIAC PROBLEMS SINCE HE WAS ASSAULTED IN DECEMBER 1988.

ALBERT MUKONG, A WRITER WHO HAD BEEN DETAINED WITHOUT TRIAL FOR SIX YEARS IN THE 1970S AND AGAIN FROM JUNE 1988-MAY 1989

STATEMENT DENYING THAT THE REASON FOR THE ARRESTS WAS THEIR EFFORTS TO FORM A POLITICAL PARTY, CLAIMING INSTEAD THAT THEY WERE ARRESTED FOR "THE HOLDING OF CLANDESTINE MEETINGS; THE FABRICATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF TRACTS HOSTILE TO THE REGIME, ABUSIVE OF THE PRESIDENT AND INCITING REVOLT." THE "HOSTILE" TRACTS INCLUDED A DRAFT FOUNDING DOCUMENT FOR A NEW POLITICAL PARTY. ACCORDINGLY, DESPITE THE GOVERNMENT'S STATEMENTS TO THE CONTRARY, THIS NEW PARTY WAS BEING EFFECTIVELY BANNED.

AT THE TIME OF THEIR ARREST, THE DEFENDANTS WERE TRYING TO FORM A POLITICAL PARTY COMPRISING TWO NEW GROUPS: THE MOUVEMENT NATIONAL POUR LA DEMOCRATIE (MND), A FRANCOPHONE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT LED BY YONDO BLACK; AND THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FRONT (SDF), AN ANGLOPHONE GROUP LED BY ALBERT MUKONG. SHORTLY AFTER THE GOVERNMENT'S MARCH 13 STATEMENT, THE SDF TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DENIAL THAT THE ARRESTS RELATED TO THEIR EFFORTS TO FORM A POLITICAL PARTY AND APPLIED TO REGISTER OFFICIALLY AS A PARTY.

AMONG THOSE ARRESTED WERE:

FOR CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT, WAS ARRESTED IN BAMENDA ON FEBRUARY 26.

ALL THE DEFENDANTS WERE TRANSFERRED TO DOUALA, WHERE THEY WERE HELD AT THE OFFICES OF THE SECURITY POLICE, KNOWN AS THE BRIGADE MIXTE MOBILE. THEY WERE DENIED ACCESS TO LAWYERS, AND MOST WERE DENIED FAMILY VISITS. TWO OF THE DETAINEES, ANICET EKANE AND HENRIETTE EKWE, WERE REPORTEDLY TORTURED OR ILL-TREATED DURING DETENTION.

THE DETAINEES WERE NOT IMMEDIATELY CHARGED, WHICH RAISED FEARS THAT THEY WOULD BE HELD WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL FOR A PROLONGED PERIOD -- NOT AN UNCOMMON SITUATION FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS IN CAMEROON. ACCORDING TO THE EMERGENCY LAWS THAT HAVE EXISTED IN CAMEROON SINCE 1961, THOSE SUSPECTED OF SUBVERSION CAN BE HELD BY THE SECURITY POLICE IN

"administrative detention" without charge or trial for two-month periods, which can be renewed. According to the penal code, administrative detention constitutes "the loss of liberty for a political felony or misdemeanor." In recent years, administrative detention has been used in a variety of cases involving government critics, outspoken journalists and supporters of the banned opposition party, the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC).

LAWYERS FROM BAR ASSOCIATION ACT IN SOLIDARITY

On March 27, the head of Cameroon's Bar Association, Bernard Muna, gave a courageous speech before a special meeting of the Bar criticizing the violations of human rights in Cameroon and calling on the Bar Association to defend these rights.

"Let us suppose that the 10 detainees actually held clandestine

in protest against the detention of Yondo Black and the others, more than 200 lawyers from the Bar Association attended the trial, and, dressed in their black robes, acted as part of the defense team. As a further sign of protest, they decided that as of March 28, they would engage in a partial strike by not attending other trials until this case was over.

Some of these lawyers were subjected to harassment by the government, including efforts to close down their offices and investigate them for tax irregularities. In addition, some received death threats.

DEFENSE LAWYER KILLED UNDER SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES

Africa Watch is extremely concerned about the death of one of the defense lawyers, Pierre Mbooba, who was killed by police in Bafoussam on April 4.

meetings, distributed tracts criticizing the government, etc., etc. Then the question one must ask is why should they have to resort to holding their meetings in a clandestine fashion and to criticize the government with anonymous tracts when the right to hold meetings and to form associations is guaranteed in our constitution, as well as in the International Charter of Human Rights and in the African Charter.... The response to this question is simple: in Cameroon during the last 25 years, citizens who have dared to exercise their rights have been arrested, tortured and detained."

The circumstances surrounding his death are still unclear. According to one version, the police shot him when he put his car in reverse and pulled away from the roadblock. According to another version, the police had been following him and, after he stopped the car to relieve himself, a plainclothes policeman startled him and shot when Mbooba reversed his car to get away from them.

The Minister of Justice, Adolphe Moudiki, said that the incident would be investigated. At this writing, Africa Watch has no further information.

Some 150 lawyers from the Bar Association attended his funeral.

JOURNALISTS ARRESTED AND FIRED FOR DISCUSSING MULTIPARTY SYSTEM

On May 7, some 10 journalists who worked for Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) were

ARRESTED FOR PARTICIPATING IN A TELEVISION DISCUSSION PROGRAM THAT TURNED INTO A DEBATE ABOUT THE MERITS OF A MULTIPARTY SYSTEM. REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE JOURNALISTS WERE RELEASED BY THE END OF THE WEEK WITHOUT CHARGES. THOSE ARRESTED INCLUDED: VICTOR EPIE NGOME, FAI HENRY FONYE, LARRY EYONG, ZACHARI ANGAFOR, A. MONJU, WAIN PAUL NGAM, NTEMFAC OFEGE, ASSONLEFACK KEMLEKE, GEORGE TANYI AND BOH HERBERT.

AFRICA WATCH HAS LEARNED THAT ONE OF THESE JOURNALISTS, GEORGE TANYI, WAS FIRED ON MAY 10. TWO OTHERS -- NTEMFAC OFEGE, AN ASSISTANT TO THE POLITICAL EDITOR, AND BOH HERBERT, THE HEAD OF THE RADIO'S POLITICAL SERVICE -- RESIGNED IN SOLIDARITY. THE REMAINING JOURNALISTS WERE DISMISSED WITHOUT PAY.

ON APRIL 22, PRESIDENT BIVA ANNOUNCED THAT THOSE STILL IN PRISON BECAUSE OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN AN ATTEMPTED COUP IN APRIL 1984 WOULD BE RELEASED. THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMUNIQUE STATED THAT THE AMNESTY REFLECTED THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL UNITY.

IT IS BELIEVED THAT THIS MEASURE WOULD EFFECT SOME 100 PRISONERS, ALTHOUGH NO EXACT INFORMATION IS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE. SOME OF THESE PRISONERS HAVE ALREADY COMPLETED THEIR SENTENCES BUT HAVE REMAINED IN DETENTION; A FEW OF THOSE ARRESTED AFTER THE COUP MAY HAVE DIED IN DETENTION.

ACCORDING TO GOVERNMENT FIGURES AFTER THE COUP ATTEMPT: 1,053 PEOPLE WERE INTERROGATED; 617 WERE RELEASED AFTER PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS; 195 WERE RELEASED BY THE MILITARY COURT; SOME 195 WERE CONVICTED AND SENTENCED TO VARIOUS PRISON TERMS, INCLUDING TWO WHO WERE SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT AND 46 SENTENCED TO DEATH.

FOR EIGHT DAYS AND HAVE BEEN PROHIBITED FROM BROADCASTING IN THE FUTURE.

ALSO DETAINED WERE TWO PROFESSORS OF JOURNALISM FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE -- SAM NOVELA FONKEM, DETAINED ON MAY 9, AND TATAH MENTANG, DETAINED ON MAY 9. STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE, WHO RARELY ENGAGE IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, PROTESTED THESE ARRESTS.

AMNESTY ANNOUNCED FOR THOSE INVOLVED IN 1984 COUP ATTEMPT

RECOMMENDATIONS

PLEASE SEND LETTERS OR TELEGRAMS TO THE AUTHORITIES LISTED BELOW CALLING FOR:

- an investigation into the death of the demonstrators in Bamenda;
- the immediate release of Mr. Black and Mr. Ekane;
- an investigation into the killing of Mr. Mbooba;
- the recognition of alternative political parties that seek to register with the government;
- the release of those journalists in detention and the reinstatement without prohibitions of the other journalists;
- the release of all those imprisoned for the peaceful expression of their political views.

SEND APPEALS TO:

SON EXCELLENCE
MONSIEUR PAUL BIYA
PRESIDENT DE LA REPUBLIQUE
PALAIS DE LA PRESIDENCE
1000 Yaounde
CAMEROON

M. ADOLPHE MOUDIKI
MINISTRE DE LA JUSTICE ET GARDE DES SCEAUX
MINISTERE DE LA JUSTICE
1000 Yaounde 4
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AFRICA WATCH is a nongovernmental organization founded in 1988 to monitor human rights practices in Africa and to promote respect for internationally recognized standards. Its Executive Director is Rakiya Omaar; its Research Director is Richard Carver; its Research Consultant is Alex de Waal; its Research Associates are Janet Fleischman and Karen Sorensen; its Associates are Jo Graham and Ben Penglose.

AFRICA WATCH is part of Human Rights Watch, an organization that comprises Americas Watch, Asia Watch, Helsinki Watch and Middle East Watch. The Chairman is Robert L. Bernstein; the Vice Chairman is Adrian Dewind; the Executive Director is Aryeh Neier; the Deputy Director is Kenneth Roth; the Washington Director is Holly Burkhalter; the Press Director is Susan Osnes; the Washington Counsel is Joyce Mendis-Cole.