

Amnesty International USA's



URGENT ACTION



UANetwork Office POBox 1270 Nederland CO 80466 T. 303.258.1170 F. 303.258.7881 E-mail. uan@aiusa.org www.amnestyusa.org/urgent/

UA 194/02 Fear for safety/risk of torture or ill-treatment/Incommunicado detention

25 June 2002

LIBERIA Hassan Bility (m) - editor
and three other men (names unknown)

On 24 June, Hassan Bility, editor of the *Analyst* Newspaper and three others, were harassed and arrested by two plain clothes men, reportedly from the Criminal Investigation Division of the Liberia National Police. They are being held in incommunicado detention and may be at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

At the time of his arrest, Hassan Bility was reportedly slapped and kicked before being shoved into a car and driven away. According to a news report on Kiss FM radio in the capital Monrovia, Hassan Bility was picked up on suspicion of "...operating a Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) Terrorist Cell in Monrovia". Hassan Bility has been arrested, questioned and detained twice in the past. The *Analyst* newspaper has been closed down twice, as the result of writing and publishing articles deemed critical of the government.

On 13 May, Hassan Bility received a telephoned death threat from a colonel in the Liberian National Police. He was told " we know you all who are writing against our Papay (President Taylor), and the time is approaching for us to deal with you guys; your writings and opinions are influencing the international community to expose the Papay" The threat came as a result of a speech by Taiwan Gongloe, the contents of which were considered threatening to the government and its national security. As a result of the speech, Taiwan Gongloe, a well known human rights lawyer, was arrested, held in detention and tortured, before being released (UA 128/02 issued 26 April 2002 and re-issued 3 May 2002.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Journalists, human rights defenders, and those deemed critical of the government are under constant threat of being arrested, held in detention without charge, and tortured. Since President Taylor declared a state of emergency in early February, there has been increased repression of government critics and those under suspicion of being dissidents and dissident collaborators. On 22 February, Former Chief Justice and current Director of the non-governmental Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, Frances Johnson Morris, was arrested by Police Director Paul Mulbah. She was held with male inmates at the police central prison for several hours. On 28 March, Augustine Toe of the Justice and Peace Commission was arrested and held without charge for several hours. On the same day, police stormed the offices of the National Human Rights Center, and arrested without charge, five staff members.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:

- expressing concern for the safety of Hassan Bility and the three other men who were arrested on 24 June;
- urging the authorities to ensure that they do not suffer any torture or ill-treatment;
- expressing concern that the authorities must either charge the men with a recognizable criminal offence or release them immediately;
- calling on the Liberian authorities to stop the security forces attacking, harassing and ill-treating human rights defenders solely for their legitimate scrutiny and criticism of the Liberian government.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic of Liberia:

His Excellency Mr Charles Taylor
Office of the President
Executive Mansion
PO Box 9001
Capitol Hill
Monrovia
Liberia

**Fax: 011 231 228 026 (if someone answers ask for a fax tone)
or 011 231 226 544**

Salutation: Dear President Taylor

Director of Police:

Paul Mulbah
National Police Force
National Police Headquarters
Monrovia
Liberia

Fax: 011 231 226 785

Salutation: Dear Mr Mulbah

Minister of Justice:

Mr Eddington Varmah
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
Ashmun St,
PO Box 9006
Monrovia
Liberia

Fax: 011 231 227 872

Salutation: Dear Mr Varmah

COPIES TO:

American Embassy in Liberia :

Ambassador
Bismark Myrick
111 United Nations Drive
Monrovia
Liberia

Fax: 011 231 226 148/49

Newspaper:

The Analyst,
Stanley Sukaloh - Editor
c/o LIPWA
PO Box 6545
Above OK Dry Cleaning
Corner of Benson & Center streets
1000 Monrovia - 10
Liberia

Fax: c/o 011 231 227 838 (Please mark for attention of Stanley Sukaloh, Editor, The Analyst)

Ambassador William V.S. Bull
Embassy of the Republic of Liberia
5201 16th St. NW
Washington DC 20011

Fax: 1 202 723 0436

Email: liberia-embassy@msn.com

Please send appeals immediately. Check with the Colorado office between 9:00 am and 6:00 pm, Mountain Time, weekdays only, if sending appeals after August 6, 2002.