

BURKINA FASO:
One year on and still no justice
In memory of Norbert Zongo

Issue 54

December 1999

Norbert Zongo was a pioneering journalist and fearless critic of the government in Burkina Faso. He was brutally killed on 13 December 1998, along with three companions. Compelling evidence points to the involvement of security officials in his murder. In an interview given in July 1997, he himself said, “you cannot be everyone’s friend”. The full text of this interview, which provides a vivid insight into his commitment to human rights, can be found as an Appendix to this report. This report honours the memory of Norbert Zongo.

ARTICLE 19 adds its voice to the many who have called for the full truth about his murder to be revealed and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

Introduction

Norbert Zongo, one of Burkina Faso’s best known journalists, was editor-in-chief of an independent weekly newspaper, *L’Indépendant*, and a founding member in 1989 of the *Mouvement Burkinabé des droits de l’homme et des peuples* (MBDHP) [Burkinabé Movement for Human and Peoples’ Rights]. The organisation became a powerful voice for justice and freedom as Burkina Faso embarked on an uncertain, flawed democratic transition. By 1998, this independent human rights organisation had representatives in all 45 provinces. As Norbert Zongo argued, the climate of impunity for violators of human rights has remained a fundamental problem in Burkina Faso.

One Year on and Still No Justice

On 13 December 1998, he became a victim of the climate of impunity he had fought so hard to dispel. The charred body of Norbert Zongo was found with those of two other passengers in a vehicle about 100 kilometres from the capital, Ouagadougou, on the road to Sapouy. A fourth body was found beside the vehicle. The other victims were his brother, Ernest Zongo, his chauffeur, Ablassé Nikiéma, and a companion, Blaise Ilboudo.

His brutal death is also evidence of how dangerous it can still be to exercise your right to freedom of expression in Burkina Faso. Norbert Zongo's murder caused an unprecedented public outcry in Burkina Faso which so shook the government that it agreed within days to convene a commission of inquiry including members of local civil society organisations as well as an international representative from *Reporters sans Frontières* (RSF) in order to investigate the killings. The commission of inquiry began its investigations in January 1999 and made public its findings on 7 May 1999. It pointed the finger at a senior officer of the Presidential Guard and lower ranking members of the same force, and suggested that the most likely reason for the murders was Norbert Zongo's work as an investigative journalist and, specifically, his investigation into the death in custody under torture of a personal employee of the President's brother. But the Burkina Faso government has yet to take action to implement its recommendations, not least by bringing the perpetrators to justice. The case of Norbert Zongo and his three companions has become the acid test of Burkina Faso's democratic transition. His death has sparked a massive political crisis which the ruling party, the *Congrès pour la Démocratie et la Paix* (CDP) [Congress for Democracy and Peace], led by President Blaise Compaoré, is still struggling to resolve.

The circumstances of Norbert Zongo's death

On 13 December 1998 Norbert Zongo and three companions were killed. There is strong evidence to suggest that the four deaths were the result of Norbert Zongo's relentless determination to investigate the circumstances of the death in custody of R. David Ouédraogo, chauffeur of François Compaoré, who is both President Blaise Compaoré's brother and a presidential adviser. R. David Ouédraogo had been arrested with two other domestic employees of François Compaoré in December 1997, accused of stealing money from their employer's home and taken to the military barracks. It was alleged that he had been tortured to death by members of the *Régiment de la sécurité présidentielle* (Presidential Guard) while in their barracks. These allegations were considered credible by the US State Department. (1) The two other detainees were also badly tortured while in custody.

In the absence of any formal inquiry into the case of R. David Ouédraogo, Norbert Zongo embarked upon his own investigation during 1998 through his newspaper, *L'Indépendant*. An independent commission of inquiry into Norbert Zongo's death directly links his murder to these investigations.

1 US Department of State, Burkina Faso Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998, Section 1(a).

The Public Reaction to Norbert Zongo's Death

Norbert Zongo's death provoked an enormous outburst of public indignation and protest in Burkina Faso. Several people were briefly detained for their part in the demonstrations, which at first focused on attacking the headquarters of the CDP in Ouagadougou and CDP supporters in Norbert Zongo's hometown of Koudougou. It then became a joint movement, known as the *Collectif des organisations démocratiques de masse et des partis politiques* [Collective of grassroots democratic organisations and opposition parties] which brought together trade unions, opposition parties, student and human rights groups and which called for a general strike. In mid-December 1998, Herman Yaméogo, leader of the *Alliance pour la démocratie et la fédération* (ADF/RDA), [Alliance for Democracy and the Federation], which is a member of the *Collectif*, was briefly held at the *Gendarmerie* during an Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit meeting in Ouagadougou, in an apparent attempt to silence him.

On 18 December 1998 the government announced it would set up a commission of inquiry comprising members of civil society and international representatives. However, sectors of the population were not satisfied that the commission of inquiry would be sufficiently independent and so a few days later set up their own inquiry. Eventually a compromise was reached with the government. The proportion of non-governmental representatives was increased and commission of inquiry members were granted immunity from prosecution. However, once the commission of inquiry was established, there were further delays as family members and members of the *Collectif* withdrew their support until demonstrators were released and the "state of siege" was lifted throughout the country.

The independent commission of inquiry's findings

The 11-person commission of inquiry was set the task of "carrying out investigations which would reveal the causes of death" of the four people on 13 December 1998. It was formally established on 25 January 1999 and began hearing testimonies on 1 February. It collected testimonies from 204 people despite widespread fears of harassment. The commission of inquiry had the power to compel people to testify. The commission of inquiry suffered from the fact that some of its support staff were withdrawn without notice and before its work was completed by involved ministries and the national *Gendarmerie*. The commission of inquiry was able to profit from the co-operation of a ballistic and incendiary expert who examined the burnt-out vehicle and the ammunition retrieved and a pathologist who together with a forensic doctor carried out autopsies on the four corpses.

One Year on and Still No Justice

On 7 May 1999 the independent commission of inquiry made public its conclusions – it stated clearly that Norbert Zongo had been killed for purely political motives because he was a committed investigative journalist. It asserted: “He defended a democratic ideal and took up the commitment, with his newspaper, to fight for the respect of human rights and justice and against public mismanagement and impunity”. The report established that the fire which engulfed the vehicle was not linked to a mechanical fault but had been deliberately caused by pouring an alcohol-based liquid on the car and setting it alight.

It further concluded that Norbert Zongo and his companions were murdered. They had been shot before they and their vehicle were set alight. The commission of inquiry examined various possible explanations for the attack - highway bandits, hunters, cattle raiders, foreign actors, or a crime committed by the opposition or the State. Six members of the Presidential Guard were named as prime suspects in the murder of Norbert Zongo. They were: Christophe Kombacere (a soldier), Ousseini Yaro (a soldier), Corporal Wampasba Nacoulma, Sergeant Banagoulo Yaro, Sergeant Edmond Koama and Adjutant Marcel Kafando. The commission of inquiry recommended that judicial proceedings should be instituted against them and stated that, given the “barbaric” nature of the crime, there should be no limit on the period during which it can be investigated.

Norbert Zongo had, according to the commission of inquiry’s report, been investigating several topics, which could have been “irritating” to the authorities. They listed various investigations, including those dealing with economic fraud and electoral malpractice, his concerns about a modification to the Constitution allowing the President to be re-elected indefinitely, and his determination to discover the truth about the “R. David Ouédraogo Affair”. It stated that the other three victims were killed because they would have otherwise been witnesses to the crime.

Various witnesses testified that Norbert Zongo had previously been threatened. Reference was made to attempts to poison him and to death threats he had received. Speaking of the past, a senior lawyer, Dramane Yaméogo, stated: “Norbert used to write that he had received threats and I have no reason to doubt him.”

The report also states that if the judicial authorities had properly investigated the circumstances of R. David Ouédraogo’s death (which the report implies was a direct result of torture), it is possible that the death of Norbert Zongo and his three companions could have been avoided.

It was not until 30 March 1999 that it was made public that François Compaoré had been charged on 18 January 1999 with the murder of R. David Ouédraogo and with harbouring his body. He was never arrested or detained and remains a free man to this day. The day after the charges were made public, the Appeal Court in Ouagadougou responded to François Compaoré’s request that charges be withdrawn by ruling that they were not competent to hear the case and by referring it to a military court. As R. David Ouédraogo had died in custody of members of the Presidential Guard, the judge declared that military jurisdiction was more appropriate. No subsequent action is

One Year on and Still No Justice

known to have taken place under any military jurisdiction. The report also noted that the action taken by the authorities in reaction to R. David Ouédraogo's death was slow and fell far short of international human rights standards.

The commission of inquiry called for an end to impunity in Burkina Faso. This demand was not new in Burkina Faso. In April 1998, the MBDHP submitted a complaint to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights about the government's failure to investigate and establish accountability for past human rights violations. In October 1998, the government agreed to negotiate with the MBDHP measures to resolve the various cases raised in the complaint. (2) In doing so, the government was acknowledging that the problem of impunity was a real one.

Government reaction to the commission of inquiry findings

In early May 1999, the report of the commission of inquiry was handed to the Prime Minister, Mr Kadre Ouédraogo, who said that appropriate measures would be taken in response to the report. In mid-May, Herman Yaméogo was again arrested after violent demonstrations in Koudougou, the hometown of both Herman Yaméogo and Norbert Zongo. He was accused of ordering acts of vandalism, but no charges were brought and he was released after three days. His home reportedly had been attacked by a militia group linked to senior government officials. Halidou Ouédraogo, President of the MBDHP and Chairman of *the Union Interafricaine des Droits de l'Homme* (UIDH) [Inter-African Human Rights Union], was also briefly held with Thibaut Nana, President of the Thomas Sankara Association.

On 9 May, shortly after publication, the Secretary General of RSF, Robert Ménard, who had been a member of the commission of inquiry was expelled from the country – although the Minister responsible for Territorial Administration later described the act as being “escorted to the border”. The same Minister had reportedly told *Agence France Presse* that the government was holding Robert Ménard morally responsible for the student demonstrations which had followed radio interviews in which he has spoken of the commission of inquiry's conclusions.

On 21 May 1999, President Blaise Compaoré pledged to reform the Presidential Guard. He also ordered the release of all imprisoned demonstrators except for those who were accused by civil parties of acts of violence and vandalism. He also undertook to ensure that the magistrate investigating the Norbert Zongo dossier would be relieved of other casework so that he could concentrate fully on the case. The *Collectif* had been instrumental in advocating fundamental reforms to the Presidential Guard. The President also set up a *Collège des sages*, [college of elders] to deal with the question of past crimes which remained unpunished. On 17 June 1999, the *Collège des sages* called for the arrest of those responsible for the death of R. David

One Year on and Still No Justice

Ouédraogo. On the following day, three people were arrested and taken to *the Maison d'Arrêt et de Correction de Ouagadougou* (MACO) [Ouagadougou Detention and Correctional Centre], where they remain at the time of writing. Their names had also appeared in the commission of inquiry's report as suspects in the murder of Norbert Zongo and his companions. They are:

- ◆ Adjudant Marcel Kafando, an important figure within the Presidential Guard who had been briefly detained while the commission of inquiry was sitting for giving them contradictory alibis;
- ◆ Sergeant Edmond Koama; and
- ◆ Ousseini Yaro, a soldier.

However, none of these three men have been formally charged with the murder of R. David Ouédraogo to date and no one has been arrested or charged in connection with the death of Norbert Zongo and his companions.

In July 1999, the RSF's Secretary General, Robert Ménard, a member of the commission of inquiry, was prevented from re-visiting Burkina Faso. He had wanted to ascertain the progress made by the government in responding to the recommendations of the commission of inquiry, but the authorities declared his visit "ill-timed" and likely to "compromise the tranquillity" of the country. In September 1999, the Minister of Communication responded to pressure at the Francophone Summit by saying that an RSF representative would be welcome to visit Burkina Faso. However, when their delegation arrived at the airport on 17 September 1999, they were detained by plain-clothes officials who told them the chief of the *Gendarmerie* had ordered that they immediately reboard the plane. They were escorted to the plane and denied the right to contact their diplomatic representative in Ouagadougou.

The *Collège des sages* has also recommended that a commission of truth, justice and reconciliation be set up. However, the government has instead created a commission of national reconciliation, with no reference to the vital elements of truth and justice. This has further enraged public opinion in Burkina Faso, which is impatient to see perpetrators of human rights abuses held accountable for their actions.

Conclusion and recommendations

Three people are presently in custody in connection with the murder of R. David Ouédraogo in late 1997. They are being held without charge or trial. Perhaps if it had not been for the extensive and sustained public outcry in reaction to Norbert Zongo's death, no one at all would have been arrested. They should either be promptly charged and tried in a manner consistent with international fair trial standards or released. However, the fact that François Compaoré remains at liberty suggests that it may be the "little men" who will pay the price for R. David Ouédraogo's

One Year on and Still No Justice

death rather than the powerful facing justice. Meanwhile, no one is close to being held accountable for the death of Norbert Zongo and his three companions. It is no exaggeration to claim that Burkina Faso's democratic future may depend on a just resolution of these apparently interconnected murders.

The nomination in June 1999 of a *Collège des sages* to deal with questions of impunity is an important first step towards breaking the cycle of human rights violations which has characterised Burkina Faso's history. It is reported that this group comprising former heads of state, traditional and religious leaders has already received numerous representations covering economic as well as political crimes, implying some public confidence in this body. But it is essential that these investigations are eventually handed over to a judicial body. While such a full and public exploration of the facts can be useful, it must be followed by a full criminal investigation and a clear judicial determination of guilt or innocence. The demand of the *Collège des sages* for truth and justice as well as reconciliation must be heeded.

In addition to holding past violators of human rights to account, it is essential that there is respect for freedom of expression if matters of public interest are to come to light. It is therefore worrying that journalists continue to be detained. On 15 September 1999, Paulin Yaméogo, editor in chief of the weekly *San Finna*, was called to the Office of State Security and detained. In a recent editorial the newspaper had published an article entitled: "When Blaise Compaoré rolls out the red carpet for the coup-plotters" (3) which reportedly criticised the government's gangster-like administration and spoke of dissatisfaction within the military. He was held for a few days before being released without charge. Respect for the right to freely express one's opinions and impart information is an essential component of respect for human rights. In particular, freedom of information legislation would facilitate future access to official information by the media and might remove the need for the successors to Norbert Zongo to take such enormous risks in pursuit of the truth.

Recommendations for action by the Burkinabé authorities

ARTICLE 19 believes that a number of steps should be taken to address the concerns described above and to bring Burkina Faso's law and practice fully into accordance with international human rights standards, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which Burkina Faso has ratified. The authorities should:

- ◆ Immediately end all official harassment of individuals for the non-violent exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. In particular, no one should be

³ "Quand Blaise Compaoré déroule le tapis rouge aux putschistes"

One Year on and Still No Justice

subject to threats, questioning, arrest or detention for criticising the government or public figures or for investigating human rights violations;

- ◆ Ensure that those held in connection with the death of R. David Ouédraogo and any person subsequently arrested in connection with the case of Norbert Zongo and his companions are promptly charged and given a fair trial in accordance with international standards. Prolonged periods of administrative detention cannot be justified in these cases. If persons detained are not to be charged and tried promptly in line with international fair trial standards, they should be released;
- ◆ With regard for the murder of Norbert Zongo and his companions, respond in good faith to the recommendations of the independent commission of inquiry. For example:
 - Policing regulations should be strictly adhered to so that there is a clear distinction between the military and police functions, including in matters of state security.
 - The regulatory body for the Presidential Guard should be controlled by the Republican Army and the regiment handling presidential security should be restricted to protecting the Head of State.
 - All pending cases of “disappearances” or killings must be fully investigated and definitively concluded.
 - Legal steps should be taken to ensure that there is no time limit on the investigation into the murder of Norbert Zongo and his three colleagues.
- ◆ Introduce as a matter of priority freedom of information legislation to promote freedom of expression and official accountability. ARTICLE 19 has elaborated guidelines on freedom of information which are summarised below:
 - Freedom of information legislation should be guided by the principle of maximum disclosure;
 - Public bodies should be under an obligation to publish key information;
 - Public bodies must actively promote open government;
 - Exceptions should be clearly and narrowly drawn and subject to strict “harm” and “public interest” tests;
 - Requests for information should be processed rapidly and fairly and an independent review of any refusals should be available;
 - Individuals should not be deterred from making requests for information by excessive costs;
 - Meetings of public bodies should be open to the public;
 - Laws which are inconsistent with the principle of maximum disclosure should be amended or repealed;
 - Individuals who release information on wrongdoing – whistleblowers – must be protected. (4)

4 For further details regarding these guidelines, refer to *The Public's Right to Know – Principles on Freedom of Information Legislation* (ARTICLE 19: London, June 1999).

One Year on and Still No Justice

Finally, in response to the recommendations of the *Collège des sages*:

- Establish a credible and independent truth, justice and reconciliation commission to investigate past human rights abuses in Burkina Faso;
- Initiate criminal investigations of all past unresolved human rights abuses with a view to bringing those responsible to justice.

APPENDIX

Interview with Norbert Zongo,

An interview carried out in Ouagadougou on 29 July 1997⁵

*In this interview, Norbert Zongo speaks of his commitment to human rights as a founding member of the **Mouvement Burkinabé des droits de l'homme et des peuples (MBDHP)**, Burkinabé Movement for Human and Peoples' Rights, a pioneering human rights organisation. He looks at the dilemmas facing a non-governmental human rights organisation, including how to retain your independence and how to ensure that you do not become elitist. After a long career as a journalist under various governments, he became editor of **L'Indépendant**, a weekly newspaper, which pursued several investigations into allegations of corruption and human rights violations and into legal issues.*

Arrival at the MBDHP

I am a founding member of the MBDHP. I was at the constituent meeting of the MBDHP. Burkina has experienced many states of emergency since independence and I think there have only been one or two very brief phases when we have had rule of law. That is how intellectual circles began to see the need to create a human rights movement. I did not join a moving train; I was among those at the first constituent meeting of the MBDHP.

Personal experiences

I was a journalist before Sankara and under Sankara.⁶ I was not in the independent media. Before and under Sankara, I was a government journalist. But that was during the revolutionary period, with its ideas and its methods. I worked during that period.

I had problems before Sankara. I was even arrested and all that under the government before him. That was also because of what I wrote. The human rights movement arrived because we

⁵ This interview was carried out in the context of research on *the Mouvement Burkinabé des droits de l'homme et des peuples (MBDHP)*, Burkinabé Movement for Human and Peoples' Rights, by Juliane Kippenberg. The findings contributed to her dissertation entitled: *Urban Protest and State Violence – Human Rights Activism in Burkina Faso*, 30 September 1997, Institute of Commonwealth Studies. ARTICLE 19 would like to thank Juliane Kippenberg for making this interview available.

⁶ Thomas Sankara was President of the Republic from 1983 to 1987.

One Year on and Still No Justice

had to create something to stand up against this. We were all victims in one way or another before the movement was created. In my case, it was well before Sankara that I was imprisoned. I was arrested several times for my writings and for my ideas.

The role of the MBDHP in the Burkinabé political scene

You must define the role played by the MBDHP and the role it must play in the future. If you count the achievements of the MBDHP, they are considerable. It has contributed much towards the fight to free up human rights in Burkina. That is undeniable. That is thanks to the goodwill of many people, the goodwill of each member and of those who really commit themselves, who work without a second thought, without ulterior motives and who work from nothing. For example, on several occasions I have held conferences without asking for payment, not even for my travel costs. I paid for my own transport. One section needs me to give a talk, and I go there using my own money. I stay with friends, eat and then go home. That is what I mean by goodwill. People really fought and the MBDHP has brought much to the fight for human rights in Burkina.

Now there is a fundamental task to complete if the movement is to progress. It is a huge task. It is starting. The structures must be reinforced. It is essential, and this is my proposal, that it is established at village level; that MBDHP texts are summarised and written in the national language. I have given many talks but not yet in a national language. There are many people who do not understand French. There is much more left to do than has been already achieved.

The MBDHP must train people who can then go and train people who live in the countryside at village level.

MBDHP – an elitist organisation?

Precisely, yes, it is elitist. That is why I say we must separate what we have already done from what remains to be done. Today, we must go in this direction. Some things have already started. For example, the constitution has been translated into More, into Ffulde⁷. That's good. It is essential that right from village level, if there is a human rights violation, there must be a structure which can bring this up at central level.

By the term violation of human rights, you are primarily talking of civil and political rights?

⁷ More and Ffulde are local languages.

One Year on and Still No Justice

Yes, civil and political rights. And in particular, we must not hide the fact, those which affect women. The MBDHP must get involved much more in traditional structures, where primary and elementary rights of women are violated. We must get to that point. But, I do not see the MBDHP as on track to liberate people. No, it is essential that we work so that people can free themselves. If you remain elitist, sooner or later you will end up close to government. You will end up trying to reach compromises with government and that is always bad. That is the danger of elitism.

The relationship between the MBDHP and the government

Every time there is a human rights violation the MBDHP has always openly fought to put things right. But this is after negotiations have taken place out of general view. Something happens at the highest level - Halidou⁸ goes off with a group and discusses the problem with government. It is not even the whole of the MBDHP's national body which is aware. You cannot get everyone's agreement before asking questions and discussing issues. Usually, the grassroots activist does not know what has happened or what has been conceded. We know that they've been discussed, but not how that has happened... They have secured the release of prisoners. The problem is not that they got them released, the point is that the arrests should be denounced and that all institutions should know that an error has been made and that it has been criticised. But if it stays as a discussion between the MBDHP office and the government of the day, the activist no longer knows if the MBDHP has become a government advisor or if it is the government which befriends the MBDHP to sort things out.

I don't know how many conferences I've attended this year. But the same question always comes up. People ask me: how did that happen? What are your links with the government? People want to understand.

Members of the National Assembly as members of the MBDHP

I've told you that I was there at the foundation of the MBDHP. But, the same day the MBDHP was founded, I left before the end of the meeting. I was protesting because at that time, there were government people who wanted to be on the executive, in particular Salif Dialo⁹ and so on. I said, if that is what your organisation is going to be like, I'm leaving. I said, the day you send all those people away, I'll come back. People said I was being extremist and I don't accept that.

⁸ Halidou Ouédraogo is President of the MBDHP.

⁹ Salif Dialo was excluded from the MBDHP in 1990 because of his alleged involvement in the arrest of a student, Dabo Boukary, who later "disappeared". At the time of his exclusion, he was both Secretary of State at the Presidency and a member of the MBDHP executive committee.

One Year on and Still No Justice

If you don't act, you end up being compromised. When he left, I returned. I do not fight for anything else. I fight for human rights. I will stick to that. You cannot have a human rights movement which allows a violator of human rights to join. You must be logical! I certainly did not want compromises. If you tell me you are fighting for human rights, you must not take part in any activity which abuses human rights. That is the difficulty.

A basic police officer can be an activist. I even agree that police officers can fight. But, today, for some one from the ruling party whose decisions influence.... (human rights) to be part of the human rights movement, that is difficult.

Press Freedom

As everywhere else, in Burkina you have to take up responsibility for freedom of the press. The journalists themselves have to take up this responsibility. What I mean by that is that they must fight for press freedom. I do not think journalists do enough. That is my point of view. You cannot have your cake, eat it and get even more. It is not possible. It is different; you cannot mix chalk and cheese. I think that when it comes to press freedom, it is for journalists to fight to achieve it and to take up this responsibility. Yes, of course, it is difficult. I was a state journalist. I was sacked. There are some sacrifices you must accept. And you must do it all professionally, in a professional way. It is journalists themselves who do not fight hard enough.

Independent Radio - problems and current situation of Mustapha Laabli Thiombiano, director of Radio Horizon FM

It is finished now. He was attacked. Mustapha, he continues fighting. But he loves freedom. Several times, I've worked on programmes for his station on human rights which others did not want to do. The others, for example, would not let me speak on the radio because I would say things which would displease the government. You cannot be everyone's friend.

Norbert Zongo's role as Editor of the *L'Indépendant*

Yes, I've had problems - even just to publish, I've had problems. They did not want to give me the official receipt (*récipissé*). The law says that everyone should have that. It is the law that says everyone who wants to set up a newspaper must be given the receipt. The law says if you want to create a newspaper, they have one month to issue the receipt. The government made this law to tell donors that anyone can set up a newspaper in Burkina. But, when I tried, it took six months! It is impossible. So, I had to publish a newspaper regardless and people said it was against the law. I had all those problems. My good fortune is that it was at a time when Denmark invited me to attend a conference as a representative of West African writers. So, I

One Year on and Still No Justice

published the newspaper at the very moment I was to leave the country. If they had arrested me, the conference would not have taken place. The Danes would have known that there was no press freedom. If they let me leave, the newspaper would appear. So, I issued it just before I left. It was a good time to choose. The government needed the money, so they had to show that press freedom was alive and well.

The multiparty system

The opposition is almost non-existent. The Professor¹⁰ is exhausted and his party needs some new blood. There are so many people who have joined the government for various reasons. The ruling party has worked to have everyone on their side. They have made every effort to get these people. In politics, everyone has a price but that will not work forever. That is the problem, but I believe there will be a re-birth within the opposition.

Most opposition parties cannot raise their voices because they are not all honest and the government has legal files against many people in the opposition. The government can detain them legally. Within the press, there are lots of issues. There are many people who have to keep quiet. But I think that it will work out.

¹⁰ Professor Joseph Ki-Zerbo is a long-standing leading politician and leader of *the Parti pour la démocratie et le progrès*, Party for Democracy and Progress.