

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

MEDIA BRIEFING

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Equatorial Guinea: Amnesty International calls for release of all prisoners of conscience

Amnesty International today called on the Equatorial Guinea government to unconditionally release all people they continue to hold without charge or trial on account of their peaceful political activities.

The organization also urged the authorities to thoroughly investigate allegations of torture against 14 people who were released on 5 June and bring those responsible to justice.

All 14 were released following a pardon by President Obiang on his 66th birthday. Most had been held for up to six years, and had been adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience.

Those released last week include Reverend Bienvenido Samba Momesori, who had been held without charge or trial since his arrest in Malabo in October 2003.

Felipe Ondo Obiang, Guillermo Nguema Ela and another 11 prisoners of conscience, who are members of the illegal political party Democratic and Republican Front (Frente Demócrata Republicano – FDR) were also pardoned. They had been arrested in March 2002, mostly in Bata, severely tortured in pre-trial detention and tried in a grossly unfair trial in May-June 2002. They were convicted of attempting to overthrow the government and to kill the President of the Republic, and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. They were held in Black Beach Prison in Malabo. However, Felipe Ondo Obinag was transferred to Evinayong prison without due process in June 2003, where he was held in conditions which amounted to torture. He was kept in solitary confinement for several months, and chained to the wall in his cell by his left leg. Although the conditions of his imprisonment had improved of late, he continued to be chained at night.

Amnesty International is concerned that prison authorities have ordered all those released to stay in their villages of origin which they should not leave without authorisation, despite the fact that most of them had been living in other towns for many years prior to their arrest.

The pardon, which was announced on national radio and television on 4 June 2008, listed the names of 37 people, including the 14 prisoners of conscience and 11 political prisoners. However, the list included the names of at least nine people who had already been released in 2003 and 2006.

Amnesty international also urged the government of Equatorial Guinea to release all those still detained without charge or trial on account of their peaceful, political activities, including Emiliano Esono Micha, Cruz Obiang Ebebere, Gumersindo Ramírez Faustino, Bonifacio Nguema Ndong, Pedro Ndong and Gerardo Angüe -- all former members of the Progress Party of Equatorial Guinea (Partido del Progreso de Guinea Ecuatorial – PPGE) who appear to have been arrested because of their past association with the PPGE.

They were arrested in March 2008 following the alleged discovery on 4 March 2008 of three weapons and ammunition in the boot of a second hand car being exported to Equatorial Guinea from Spain.

The Equatorial Guinea government claimed that the weapons were going to be used to stage a coup by Severo Moto, the leader of the banned PPGE living in exile in Spain, who is currently in prison in Spain following his arrest in that country on 14 April 2008, on charges of arms trafficking. The organization is calling for these detainees to be immediately released unless they are charged with a recognizably criminal offence and promptly tried in accordance with international human rights standards.

Public Document

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