

UA 52/92      Arbitrary arrest, fear of torture

13 February 1992

**EQUATORIAL GUINEA:**

Plácido Mikó ABOGO  
Celestino Bacale OBIANG  
José Antonio DORRONSORO  
Arsenio MOLONGA  
José Luis NVUMBA

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The five named above, all members of the Central Committee of an opposition political party, the Convergencia para la Democracia Social (CPDS), Convergence for Social Democracy, were arrested separately on 9 February 1992 in Malabo, the capital of Equatorial Guinea. They were arrested on account of their non-violent political activities despite the promulgation in late 1991 of laws introducing a multi-party political system.

Placido Mikó Abogo, a founder of the CPDS, was reportedly arrested in the afternoon of 9 February 1992 by eight police officers. Eyewitnesses said he was severely beaten in the street where he was arrested. Celestino Bacale Obiang was reportedly arrested on the same day. According to reports he was returning from the airport where he had left a bundle of pamphlets and correspondence for a departing passenger to take to Spain. The parcel was intercepted and Celestino Bacale Obiang was pursued and arrested in the vicinity of Malabo's Spanish Embassy, where he may have been intending to seek refuge. José Antonio Dorronsoro was reportedly arrested at his home at 9 o'clock that night.

These three people are said to be held at a barracks in Malabo used by Moroccan soldiers seconded to Equatorial Guinea under a bilateral agreement with the Kingdom of Morocco as a bodyguard for President Obiang Nguema. In the past these Moroccan soldiers have routinely been given authority over Equatorial Guinean political prisoners.

Amnesty International does not yet know the circumstances of the arrests of Arsenio Molongua or José Luis Nvumba who are reportedly still held at a police station in Malabo. Several other people were also reported to have been arrested but their names are not yet known to Amnesty International.

Amnesty International is concerned that the five people mentioned above and others arrested at about the same time may be imprisoned solely on account of their membership of an opposition political party. The organization is also concerned by reports that Plácido Mikó Abogo was severely beaten at the time of his arrest and at the possibility that all these prisoners may be tortured or ill-treated while in custody; political prisoners have been routinely subjected to torture in the past.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Until late 1991 Equatorial Guinea was officially a one party state: the only permitted political party was the Partido Democrático de Guinea Ecuatorial (PDGE), Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea, led by President Obiang Nguema. However, following pressure from within as well as outside the country, a revised Constitution introducing a multi-party political system and providing for freedom of expression and association was promulgated on 17 November 1991. A law permitting political parties was passed in late December 1991.

The CPDS was formed in Equatorial Guinea in early 1991, mainly by graduate students returning from Spain, but has not been operating in the the country openly as neither the CPDS nor any other political party has been able to meet the stringent requirements for official recognition. These requirements include paying a fee equivalent to approximately US\$ 165,000, two thousand times the average yearly salary.

Throughout 1990 and 1991, scores of people were arrested in Equatorial Guinea on suspicion

of opposing government policies or supporting or being in contact with opposition parties abroad. Many apparently remain in prison or restricted to their homes despite an amnesty decree promulgated on 8 January 1992 for all political offences committed before 2 December 1991. The decree also invited exiles to return to Equatorial Guinea but Amnesty International has received reports that some of those who returned were arrested on arrival.

Equatorial Guinea became a party to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights in 1986 and to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1987.

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**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS: Telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters:**

- expressing concern that those named above are reported to have been arrested on 9 February 1992, apparently solely for exercising their right to freely express their political views as guaranteed by Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 13(b) of Equatorial Guinea's new Constitution;

- expressing concern at reports that Plácido Mikó Abogo was severely beaten at the time of his arrest; expressing concern also that, as no steps have been taken to end the practice of torture in Equatorial Guinea, he and the other detainees are at risk of being further tortured or ill-treated in custody;

- urging that, unless they are to be promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence and tried in accordance with international standards of fairness, these five people and any others detained on account of their political activities should be released immediately.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) President:

Su Excelencia

Coronel General Teodoro Obiang Nguema  
Presidente de la República  
Gabinete del Presidente de la República  
Malabo, República de Guinea Ecuatorial

**Telegrams: Presidente Obiang Nguema Malabo, República de Guinea Ecuatorial**

**Salutation: Su Excelencia / Your Excellency**

2) Minister of Justice and Religion:

Su Excelencia

Mariano Nsué Nguema  
Ministro de Justicia y Culto  
Ministerio de Justicia y Culto  
Malabo, República de Guinea Ecuatorial

**Telegrams: Ministro de Justicia Nsué Nguema  
Malabo, República de Guinea Ecuatorial**

**Telexes: 5405 GBNOM 5405 EG**

**Salutation: Su Excelencia / Your Excellency**

3) Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Su Excelencia

Benjamín Mba Ekua Mikó  
Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores  
Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores  
Malabo, República de Guinea Ecuatorial

**Telegrams: Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores Mba Ekua  
Malabo, República de Guinea Ecuatorial**

**Telexes: 5405 GBNOM 5405 EG**

and to diplomatic representatives of Equatorial Guinea in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section, if sending appeals after 25 March 1992.