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Mali: The military junta continues to impose the law

For nearly two months now, some fifty soldiers have been illegally held in the Kati military camp (20 km from Bamako, the capital) where some of them have been victims of torture and inhuman treatment. Amnesty International calls upon the Malian authorities to immediately transfer these soldiers to a recognized place of detention.

The organization is also concerned about the fate of several arrested or abducted soldiers, whose families are without news, and calls for the authorities to make known their place of detention.

These soldiers - loyal to former president, Amadou Toumani Touré toppled by a military junta on 23 March 2012 - were arrested following an attempted counter-coup in Bamako on 30 April and 1 May 2012. Some were charged with endangering State security or complicity in endangering State security, others are still held without charge.

The detainees were not held in an official place of detention but were taken to the the Kati military camp, headquarters of the military junta, and found themselves in the hands of the soldiers who they had opposed.

Prison conditions were particularly inhuman for rank and file soldiers who were separated from officers. These men were detained for over a month in inhuman conditions: they were chained 24 hours a day and kept in total darkness. They were obliged to relieve themselves in their cells and were not allowed access to the outside. Some of them were tortured: their guards handcuffed their ankles and wrists, beat them up and burnt them with cigarettes.

Following the mobilization of several lawyers, approached by the families of the detainees, the soldiers were allowed access to their lawyers and relatives at the end of May 2012.

Their situation has improved following the referral of the matter to the Minister of Justice by these lawyers. Since 4 June 2012, the Minister has gone to the Kati military camp several times, and given instructions so that prison conditions may be improved. However, almost two months after their arrest, they are still held unlawfully in an unrecognized place of detention.

In fact, Article 31 paragraph 2 of Law No. 055 of 16 December 2002 on the general status of the army clearly states that in the event of prosecution, all soldiers must be kept on gendarmerie premises.

Moreover, some families are without news of their arrested military relative. Thus, the fates of second lieutenant Boubacar Kola Cissé and soldier Alioune Maiga,, shown on television on 1 May 2012 after their arrest, remain unknown and no one knows where they are being held.

Amnesty International is also concerned about the fate of a number of soldiers injured during the counter-coup, who were abducted on 1 May 2012, by members of the military junta at the Gabriel Touré hospital in Bamako, where they were being treated. The place of detention of these people and their fate remain unknown.

Since the March 2012 coup, the military junta has carried out several waves of arrests of soldiers, political figures, journalists and other civilians. Hamadoun N'Daou, a businessman reputed to be close to former President Touré was arrested on 9 June 2011, at his home around 9 pm by armed men acting without any arrest warrant. Since then, he has been held incommunicado at the General Directorate of Public Security (DGSE, known as SE), an unofficial place of detention. His lawyer has repeatedly tried to have access to his client with no success.

Arrests continue and at least three soldiers were arrested last week. On 15 June, two soldiers, Chief Warrant Officer Ezaï Guindo and Warrant Officer Karfa Keita were arrested at the paratroopers' camp in Bamako. A third person, the second lieutenant Youssouf Moussa Ouattara was summoned to the Kati military camp where he was arrested. The reasons for their arrest and their place of detention are unknown.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The military coup led by Captain Amadou Sanago that toppled the democratically elected president, Amadou Toumani Touré, on 21 March 2012, resulted in serious violations of human rights. Many politicians were arrested and arbitrarily detained without charge.

The soldiers currently illegally detained at the Kati military camp include several senior officers of the Malian army, notably the commander Mamadou Lamine Konaré, member of the General Directorate of Public Security (DGSE, known as SE) and son of former Malian President Alpha Oumar Konare, and General Hamidou Sissoko, former chief of army staff of Amadou Toumani Touré.

Despite pressure from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the military junta still appears to hold the reins of power and continues to violate human rights with impunity.