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Guinea: What has happened to the civilians and soldiers of whom there is no news ?

Amnesty International is very concerned about the fate of several civilians and soldiers of whom there has been no news for several days and who are at risk of being subjected to torture or disappearance. They were arrested by the Guinean security forces in the days following the brutal suppression, on 28 September 2009, of a banned but peaceful demonstration as a result of which over 150 people died.

In the hours and days following the crackdown, security forces comprising members of the *Bataillon autonome des troupes aéroportées (BATA)*, Autonomous Battalion of Airborne Troops, and the Presidential Guard (known as “Red Berets”) combed several districts of the capital, Conakry, including Bomboli, Hamdalaye, Mapoto and Enco 5, the inhabitants of which are known for their opposition to the ruling junta. For instance, on 29 September 2009, the security forces raided Bomboli where they arrested people in their homes and on the street, some of whom were beaten and then placed in the boots of vehicles by the soldiers. Amnesty International does not know what has happened to these people but fears that they may have been subjected to torture or disappearance. In at least one case, an individual was dragged along the ground before being stabbed to death by a soldier in the road.

One eyewitness told Amnesty International: *“Between 4pm and 6pm, I saw the Red Berets and civilians wearing cowries (necklaces made of shells) on their heads and bodies. They were chasing young people in Bomboli and beating them. Some of them were arrested and put into the boot of one of the vehicles. Other people who had been arrested tried to get away but the soldiers shot at them. One of them was wounded and the soldiers dragged him along the tarmac. Then another soldier finished him off by stabbing him three times in the stomach, heart and back. The cortege of three vehicles, a Pajero, Toyota and Nissan, drove off taking the people who had been arrested. I counted at least ten detainees and two dead bodies in the boots of those vehicles”.*

Amnesty International is also very concerned about the fate of 37-year-old Lieutenant Mohamed Lamine Diallo who was arrested on 7 October 2009 at Alpha Yaya military barracks in Conakry by members of BATA. Since then no one has been able to contact him and his place of detention is not known. Amnesty International fears for his safety and his life because a number of soldiers have been tortured in detention in the past.

Since Daddis Camara, the head of the junta, came to power in December 2008, several soldiers have been arrested and at least eleven are still currently being held in solitary confinement and without charge in a detention facility on the island of Kassa, west of Conakry. The place where they are imprisoned is an unlawful detention facility which does not comply with the requirements of the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment. Several of the soldiers have been tortured or subjected to other forms of ill-treatment while in detention.

Amnesty International is calling on the Guinean authorities to release these people immediately unless they are charged with an offence that is properly recognized in law. It demands that the authorities indicate as quickly as possible where the people arrested since the crackdown on the demonstration of 29 September 2009 are being held and that those concerned be given access to their relatives and legal counsel and, where necessary, be provided with medical care.

Amnesty International is also appealing to the Guinean authorities to halt the extrajudicial executions that have been going on since the crackdown started. The organization has in fact been able to gather several testimonies stating that people have been killed by the security forces. For instance, Amnesty International has learned that, on 29 September 2009, in the district of La Cimenterie, Red Berets, who were looking for an alleged opposition supporter, stabbed the 75-year-old mother of the man in question to death. In another case, the body of a woman arrested by the security forces on the day of the demonstration was returned to her family. The body showed signs of sexual violence as well as marks from an iron.

Amnesty International is calling for an international inquiry to be set up to shed light on the human rights violations carried out in Conakry so that those responsible for such crimes can be brought to justice.

In accordance with the principles contained in United Nations Security Council resolutions on women and peace and security, the security and dignity of the victims of the recent events, including victims of sexual violence, must be ensured throughout the course of any such inquiry. Women's rights must also be included on the agendas of the efforts being made at national and international level to resolve this crisis.

The organization is also demanding the immediate cessation of any supplies of security or police equipment to the Guinean Government that might be used to commit gross human rights violations until such time as it has taken specific action to prevent further such abuses by the security forces and to bring those responsible for any such acts to justice.

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