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Execution of four men in Equatorial Guinea condemned

Amnesty International today condemned the execution of four men in Equatorial Guinea, all convicted of attempting to assassinate the country's President.

José Abeso Nsue, Manuel Ndong Anseme, Alipio Ndong Asumu and Jacinto Michá Obiang were executed on 21 August immediately after being convicted by a military court in the country's capital Malabo.

"These men were convicted after an unfair trial, sentenced to death and executed with chilling speed without having the slightest opportunity to appeal their sentence," said Erwin van der Borgh, Africa Director at Amnesty International.

The four men had been living as refugees in Benin for many years, when Equatorial Guinean security forces abducted them in January 2010.

The former military officers were then secretly detained in Black Beach prison in Malabo, where they reportedly "confessed" to the attack on the presidential palace on 17 February 2009.

Amnesty International received reports that they had been tortured in detention, forcing them to "confess" to taking part in the alleged attack.

"Equatorial Guinea must put an end to the abductions, torture and executions it currently carries out under the pretence of justice," said Erwin van der Borgh.

José Abeso had reportedly asked to see his family when the sentence was passed but when his wife and son arrived at Black Beach prison an hour later he had already been executed.

Equatorial Guinean authorities initially blamed the presidential palace attack on Nigerian armed group Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, who denied responsibility.

Scores of Nigerians were rounded up, imprisoned and expelled from Equatorial Guinea following the incident. Seven Nigerian fishermen and traders, who had been arrested at sea, were in April 2010 sentenced to 12 years in prison for attempting to assassinate the president.

Two Equatorial Guinean members of the opposition party People's Union (Unión Popular – UP), who were tried along with the Nigerian nationals, were acquitted in April. Despite their acquittal, Marcelino Nguema and Santiago Asumu were last week convicted on the same charges and were on 21 August sentenced by the Malabo military court to 20 years and one day in prison.

"Marcelino Nguema and Santiago Asumu were tried twice on the same charges in a clear violation of international law. We consider them prisoners of conscience and are calling for their immediate and unconditional release," said Erwin van der Borgh.

Equatorial Guinea has been criticised by the UN for abducting Equatorial Guinean refugees from neighbouring countries and holding them in secret detention.