

PUBLIC

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UA 121/00 Fear for safety

17 May 2000

GUINEA-BISSAU Inácio Tavares

Members of the Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League

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Senior military officers have apparently threatened to have human rights activists beaten for publicising abuses by soldiers.

In a 12 May press statement the Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League expressed concern at reports of soldiers beating civilians. The president of the organisation, Inácio Tavares, had also raised these concerns in an interview with the Portuguese international radio station, RTP, that morning. Angered at this, senior military officers reportedly said they would have Inácio Tavares and other League members beaten.

League members have been threatened before for reporting human rights violations by soldiers.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

A civil war which broke out in June 1998 ended in May 1999 when the *Junta Militar* (Military Junta) led by Brigadier Ansumane Mané ousted the president. Elections were held in January 2000. Although the new President, Kumba Ialá, has promised to fight corruption and impunity and uphold human rights, and the junta had always maintained that the army would return to barracks after the war, soldiers are reported to have beaten and arrested civilians.

Among other abuses detailed in the Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League press statement: on 9 May soldiers apparently arrested and beat three electrical technicians after power cuts; the next day members of junta leader Brigadier Ansumane Mané's bodyguard stopped a taxi driver and beat him, apparently for being in the way of the military leader's motorcade; and on 12 May soldiers severely beat a youth who failed to greet them.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Portuguese or your own language:**

- expressing concern at reports that senior military officers have reportedly threatened to have members of the Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League beaten;
- asking the authorities to investigate the reports and take action to ensure the safety of League members;
- expressing concern about the reports of soldiers beating civilians, urging that these reports be investigated and the suspected perpetrators brought to justice and fairly tried;
- calling on the authorities to respect Article 12 of the Declaration on the right and responsibility of individuals, groups and organs of society to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, approved by the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1998/7 at its 31<sup>st</sup> meeting on 3 April 1998. Article 12.2 states: The State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone ... against any violence, threats, retaliation ... discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of their legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in this Declaration.

**APPEALS TO: (Please note that it is not easy to fax to Guinea-Bissau - you may have to try through your international telephone operator.)**

President of the Republic  
Sua Excelência Kumba Yalá

Presidente da República  
Gabinete do Presidente da República  
Praça dos Heróis Nacionais  
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**Telegrams: President Yala, Bissau, Guinea-Bissau**  
**Fax: + 245 201 404**  
**Salutation: Sua Excelência/Your excellency**

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Minister of Defence  
Sua Excelência Fernando Correia Ladim  
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República da Guiné-Bissau  
**Salutation: Sua Excelência/Your excellency**

**COPIES TO:**

diplomatic representatives of Guinea-Bissau accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 28 June 2000.