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Equatorial Guinea: Detainees severely tortured - five already dead

Amnesty International today urged the Government of Equatorial Guinea to stop the incommunicado detention and allow access to medical care of dozens of detainees who have been tortured and left to suffer appalling prison conditions.

“That the authorities have tortured these people -- to the extent that five of them have died -- mostly on account of their ethnic origin is contemptible,” Amnesty International stated.

“How many more detainees have to die before the authorities allows them access to the medical attention they urgently need?”

The group were detained since 21 January in connection with attacks on military barracks on Bioko Island. Amnesty International fears that many of the detainees, predominantly members of the Bubi, the ethnic group native to Bioko Island, may have been detained just because of their ethnic origin.

Most of them have been ill-treated to extract confessions and some of them appeared on television with visible marks of torture. Reliable reports indicate that several detainees were suffering from severe beatings on the feet.

One of these detainees, Ireneo Barbosa Elobé, died in the hospital on 1 March. He had shown signs of mental disturbance from torture while in detention. Requests by his mother to release him for few days to give him some traditional medicine were turned down. By the time he was taken to hospital, it was too late to save his life.

Amnesty International learned also of the case of Carmelo Yeck Bohopo who, in his 60s, allegedly died as a result of torture and beatings. He was buried on 13 February but no autopsy is known to have been carried out.

Three other detainees, whose names are not known to Amnesty International, allegedly died in custody after being tortured. Their bodies were also taken to hospital. The police who took their bodies to the morgue refused to disclose their names.

Unconfirmed reports suggest that an unknown number of other Bubi detainees recently died in detention and were buried in mass graves by members of the security forces.

Amnesty International is also concerned that some of the detainees may soon face an unfair trial and that if convicted they may face the death penalty. The organization urges the government to ensure that this trial take place before a civilian court and that the defendants be guaranteed the right to a defence lawyer and the right of appeal to a higher tribunal. It is also imperative to ensure that no statement alleged to have been made as a result of torture and ill-treatment is used as evidence in court.

Amnesty International is calling any future court not to resort to death penalty. It is also urging the authorities to abolish executions in Equatorial Guinea.
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