

UA 69/00

Prison Conditions / Health concern

24 March 2000

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Miguel Vandí
Cesar Copoburu
Aurelio Losoha, aged 75
Alejandro Mbe Bitá
Emilio Ribas Esado
Gregorio Bomuagasi
Milagrosa Cheba (f)

And some 30 - 40 others

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the health of some 40 prisoners, particularly those named above, whose lives are in danger as a result of spending two years in extremely harsh conditions of detention.

Many of the prisoners are in very poor health and suffering from exhaustion, nearly all still have injuries as a result of being severely tortured during the first weeks of detention. They have been held in overcrowded cells, without adequate diets and without access to adequate medical care. Most of them are only likely to have survived because their relatives have brought them food and medicine.

On 3 March 2000, their situation was made worse when they were transferred from prison in the capital Malabo, on Bioko Island, to Evinayong, some 500 Kilometres east of Malabo, making it very difficult for their families to bring them medicine and food and provide moral support. As the prisoners now reportedly have to buy their own food, and only some of them have money to do so, many could soon be nearing starvation. Those named above are thought to be among the weakest of the group.

No official reason has been given for their transfer and their relatives' anxiety has been made worse because the authorities have not given official confirmation of where they are now detained.

Emilio Ribas Esado is suffering from inflamed testicles, Gregorio Bomuagasi has not been treated for a broken jawbone he sustained when police arrested him in January 1998. Milagrosa Cheba, the only woman in the group, has been ill enough on several occasions to need hospitalization but was returned to detention before she recovered.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Some 500 Bubis, the autochthonous ethnic group on Bioko Island were arrested after a number of military barracks on the island were attacked in January 1998 killing four soldiers and three civilians. The government blamed the attacks on the *Movimiento para la Auto-determinación de la Isla de Bioko* (MAIB), Movement for the Self-determination of Bioko Island, a Bubi political party, and made many arrests (see UA 302/98, AFR 24/26/98, 30 November 1998 and follow ups and UA 24/98, AFR 24/01/98, 23 January 1998 and follow ups).

In May 1998 more than 110 Bubis accused of involvement in the attacks were tried by a military court. Fifteen people were sentenced to death (four in absentia), and some 70 people were sentenced to prison terms ranging from six to 26 years. Many defendants, predominantly members of the Bubi ethnic group, appear to have been detained solely because of their ethnic origin. Many had been forced to make statements under torture.

An Amnesty International delegation attending the trial noticed that a number of defendants showed signs of torture. At least six died during pre-trial detention and two others after the trial. Since the sentences were passed, several prisoners have fallen ill as a result of the harsh prison conditions. Most have been denied medical care. One prisoner, Martín Puyé, aged 58, a leader

of MAIB died in hospital in July 1999, reportedly as a result of ill-treatment and lack of adequate medical care. Another detainee, Digno Sepa Tobachi, "Elako", died in October 1999 as a result of torture and lack of medical care.

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

- expressing grave concern for the health of about 40 Bubi prisoners transferred on 3 March 2000 from prison in Malabo to Evinayong, where conditions are reported to be very harsh and where it is difficult for their families to visit them;
- urging the authorities to provide all prisoners with enough food and water and adequate medical treatment, especially in the cases of those named above (please name them);
- calling on the authorities to grant prisoners and detainees in Evinayong prison immediate access to international humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross.

APPEALS TO:

President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo
Presidente de la República
Gabinete del Presidente de la República
Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

Telegrams: Presidente Obiang, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

Telexes: 5405 GBNOM 5405 EG

Faxes: + 240 9 3313

Salutation: Excelencia / Your Excellency

Prime Minister Angel Serafín Seriche Dougan
Primer Ministro
Gabinete del Primer Ministro
Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

Telegrams: Primer Ministro Seriche Dougan, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

Telexes: 5405 GBNOM 5405 EG

Salutation: Sr. Don / Dear Prime Minister

Secretary of State for Security, Colonel Manuel Nguema Mba
Secretario de Estado para la Seguridad Nacional
Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

Telegrams: Colonel Manuel Nguema Mba, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

Telexes: 5405 GBNOM 5405 EG

Salutation: Sr. Don / Dear Secretary of State

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Santiago Nsobeya Efuman
Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores
Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores
Equatorial Guinea

and to diplomatic representatives of Equatorial Guinea accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 May 2000.