

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 24/25/98

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To: Health professionals
From: Medical Office / West Africa Regional Team
Date: 21 October 1998

***Further Information on
MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION***

Lack of adequate medical care in prisons

**EQUATORIAL GUINEA
[See AI Index: AFR 24/19/98; 21 July 1998]**

Theme: incommunicado detention / lack of adequate medical care / possible POCs

Summary

On 21 July 1998, Amnesty International issued a medical action on behalf of a number of prisoners held in Black Beach Prison in Equatorial Guinea. This action followed the death at the age of 58 of Martin Puye, one of the leaders of the Movimiento para la Auto-determinación de la Isla de Bioko [MAIB], Movement for the Self-determination of Bioko Island. His death reportedly was the result of ill-treatment and lack of adequate medical care while in custody.

No response has been received from the Equatorial Guinean authorities following Amnesty International's request for an immediate investigation into the death of Martin Puye. The death sentences imposed on 11 prisoners [plus four in absentia] tried together with Martin Puye in June 1998 were commuted in September. However, the 11 prisoners are still being held incommunicado and in conditions which put their health at serious risk.

Amnesty International is calling on the Equatorial Guinean authorities to guarantee the prisoners access to their lawyers and families, and to provide them with adequate medical treatment in accordance with the principles laid down in the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

Recommended Actions

Appeals are requested from health professionals, preferably written in good Spanish, to the addresses below:

- introducing yourself as a health professional concerned about the apparent lack of adequate medical care in prisons in Equatorial Guinea
- welcoming the fact that the death sentences imposed on 15 prisoners because of their alleged involvement in the attack on the military barracks on Bioko Island in January 1998 have been commuted
- calling on the Equatorial Guinean authorities to guarantee the prisoners access to their lawyers and families
- seeking information on the current state of health of the prisoners still held in connection with the January attack and especially of the 11 still held incommunicado,

and urging the authorities to provide them with all the necessary medical care in accordance with provisions set out in the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners [Rule 22(2)]

- reiterating serious concerns about the death of Martin Puye reportedly as a result of ill-treatment and lack of medical care, and calling for a prompt and impartial investigation into the circumstances of his death the findings of which should be made public
- urging the authorities to bring anyone found guilty of torture or ill-treatment of prisoners in Equatorial Guinea to justice

If you receive no reply from the government or other recipients within two months of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow up letter seeking a response. Please check with the medical team if you are sending appeals after 30 November 1998, and send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat (att: medical team).

ADDRESSES

President
General Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo
Presidente de la República
Gabinete del Presidente
Malabo
Guinea Ecuatorial
Faxes: + 240 9 3313
Salutation: Señor Presidente/ Dear President

Minister of Justice
Rubén Maye Nsue
Ministro de Justicia
Ministerio de Justicia
Malabo
Guinea Ecuatorial
Faxes: + 240 9 2824
Salutation: Señor Ministro/ Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
Miguel Oyono Ndong Mifumu
Vice-Primer Ministro y
Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores
Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores
Guinea Ecuatorial

Alejandro Artucio
UN Special Rapporteur on Equatorial Guinea
International Commission of Jurists
81A, Av de Châteleine
CH-1219 CHATELEINE GENEVE

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

'No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment'
Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Article 5

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Amnesty International is calling on the Equatorial Guinean authorities to guarantee the prisoners access to their lawyers and families, and to provide them with adequate medical treatment in accordance with the principles laid down in the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

Background information

Amnesty International is concerned that prisoners in Equatorial Guinea, especially those sentenced to death or held in incommunicado detention, are often held in grossly sub-standard conditions and do not have access to adequate medical care.

The prisoners sentenced together with Martin Puye for their alleged involvement in the 21 January 1998 attack on military barracks on Bioko Island, which led to the death of three soldiers and several civilians, were predominantly members of the Bubi ethnic group in Bioko Island. Since Equatorial Guinea's independence from Spain in 1968 many Bubi people have been killed and arrested for expressing their desire to be independent. Amnesty International is concerned that some of these prisoners were detained solely because of their ethnic origin and appear to be prisoners of conscience.

In Black Beach prison, conditions are reportedly very harsh and prisoners are crowded into small and filthy cells. The eleven political prisoners whose death sentence has been commuted in September are still held in incommunicado detention and are being kept in severe conditions. They are not allowed to speak with the other detainees and can only leave their cells one hour a day. They are in serious danger of dehydration and starvation as they are not allowed to receive food from their family and the prison gives them very little food. Despite the heat and humidity, they are given only a litre of water a day. The prison has no medical facilities, prisoners have to pay for any treatment themselves, and the authorities are reluctant to allow prisoners to be transferred to hospital. Several prisoners in Black Beach are reported to be in poor health. Amnesty International is urging the Equatorial Guinean authorities to guarantee the rights enshrined in the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.