

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Arrest and possible ill-treatment of
prisoner of conscience

15 January 1990

GUINEA-BISSAU: João Guilherme Furtado

João Guilherme Furtado is reported to have been arrested on 28 December 1990 in the customs department of the post office in Bissau, the capital. He had just collected a parcel from Portugal which was opened by customs officials. It contained some clothing and documents published by an exile political group, the Resistência da Guiné-Bissau - Movimento Bafata (RGB/MB), Guinea-Bissau Resistance - Bafata Movement). Since his arrest he has been held incommunicado in the Segunda Esquadra (Second Squadron), a prison in Bissau. He is feared to have been ill-treated.

João Guilherme Furtado, a worker in a French firm operating in Bissau, was apparently arrested solely because of his support for the RGB/MB which has called for non-violent political change. The documents included a pamphlet calling for free, multi-party elections in Guinea-Bissau, and the statutes and program of the movement.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In December 1990, following debates in the country about political pluralism, the Central Committee of the ruling party, the Partido Africano da Independência de Guiné-Bissau e Cabo Verde (PAIGC), African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, agreed that multi-party legislative elections could take place in 1991. President João Bernardo Vieira ("Nino") invited political opponents to return to the country to take part in the preparations for political pluralism. Earlier, he had said that parties with an ethnic or regional bias, including the RGB/MB, would not be allowed to participate. (The authorities apparently consider that the RGB/MB represents only the Balanta, Guinea-Bissau's largest ethnic group.)

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern that João Guilherme Furtado is reported to have been arrested solely for exercising his rights to freedom of opinion and to receive information which does not advocate violence;
- expressing concern that he has apparently not been given access to his family or to a lawyer and that he is reported to have been subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment;
- expressing concern that he is apparently still being detained without charge, urging that he should not be kept in custody unless he is charged with a specific offence, and that, if he is charged,

he should be promptly and fairly tried with full guarantees for his defence;

- urging that if he has been arrested only for receiving information, a right provided in Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (to which Guinea-Bissau acceded to in 1986), he should be immediately and unconditionally released.

APPEALS TO

Sua Excelência
 Presidente João Bernardo Vieira
 Gabinete do Presidente da República
 Praça dos Heróis Nacionais
 Bissau
 República da Guiné-Bissau

Telegrams: Presidente João Bernardo Vieira,
 Bissau, República da Guiné-Bissau.
 Telexes: 251 PCR BI

Sua Excelência
 Mario Cabral
 Ministro da Justiça
 Ministério da Justiça
 Bissau
 República da Guiné-Bissau

Telegrams: Ministro da Justiça Mario Cabral,
 Bissau, República da Guiné-Bissau.

Sua Excelência
 Júlio Semedo
 Ministro de Negócios Estrangeiros
 Ministério de Negócios Estrangeiros
 Bissau
 República da Guiné-Bissau

Telegrams: Ministro de Negócios Estrangeiros Júlio Semedo,
 Bissau, República da Guiné-Bissau.
 Telex: 249 MNESTRA BI

Sua Excelência
 Mário Lopes
 Procurador Geral da República
 Procuradoria Geral da República
 Bissau
 República da Guiné-Bissau

Telegrams: Procurador Geral da República Mário Lopes,
 Bissau, República da Guiné-Bissau.

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Guinea-Bissau in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 February 1990.