

UA 42/01

Prison conditions/health concern

15 February 2001

GUINEA-BISSAU

General Bouta Nan Batcha
Nhande Seidi
Braima Djassi
Laminé Turé
Braima Sanhá
General Augusto da Costa de Sa
General Armando Soares da Gama
Mário Gomes
Colonel Ansumba Mané
Mamadú Seidi
Aliu Bangura
Augusto Fernandes
Domingos Djalo
And at least 40 others

At least 55 detainees held in very harsh conditions in several detention centres in Guinea-Bissau are in serious ill-health and are in need of urgent medical attention.

The 55 including those named above have been held since November 2000 in several prisons in the capital, Bissau. Many are suffering from hypertension, infections and other illnesses for which they are not receiving any medical care. They are held in severely overcrowded conditions with no running water, no adequate sanitation and a poor diet.

One detainee, Colonel Baba Djassi, died on 4 February 2001, apparently of typhoid fever. He had been taken to hospital the previous day. It appears that he had been seriously ill for some days, during which time the authorities refused to transfer him to hospital.

The "Second Squadron" police station, the main police station in Bissau, houses 73 detainees, at least 25 of whom are reported to be seriously ill. Amnesty International is particularly concerned about the health of General Bouta Nan Batcha, Nhande Seidi, Braima Djassi and Laminé Turé.

Other detainees in need of urgent medical treatment include Braima Sanhá, held at the Amura Fortress. Others are detained at the Bissalanca air base: General Augusto da Costa de Sa, General Armando Soares da Gama and Mário Gomes are suffering from hypertension, while Colonel Ansumba Mané, has renal problems. Mamadú Seidi, Aliu Bangura, Augusto Fernandes and Domingos Djalo are held at the navy headquarters.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In early November 2000 President Kumba Ialá promoted several army officers. The former leader of the disbanded Military Junta, General Ansumane Mané, revoked the promotions, dismissed the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces and his deputy, ordered their arrest and proclaimed himself Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces.

Fighting erupted briefly in Bissau on 23 November between army factions loyal to the government and General Ansumane Mané's supporters. The forces loyal to the government soon quelled the rebellion and arrested about 200 soldiers and police officers, 124 of whom are currently in detention. Several civilian politicians were also arrested and accused of supporting General Ansumane Mané but were released a week later uncharged. General Ansumane Mané was killed by soldiers loyal to the government.

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

- expressing grave concern about the health of at least 55 detainees who are being held in harsh conditions in several detention centres in Bissau;

- urging the authorities to provide adequate medical care to all the detainees as a matter of urgency, in particular to the 55 whose health is known to have seriously deteriorated;
- pointing out that the government is obliged to ensure the humane treatment of all prisoners and to safeguard their well-being by providing adequate food, water, sanitation and medical care.

APPEALS TO: (Please note fax lines in Guinea-Bissau are frequently difficult to reach.)

President

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Presidente da República
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Minister of Justice

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Procurator General

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COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Sua Excelência Pedro da Costa
Ministro dos Negócios Estrangeiros e Cooperação
Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros
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and 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 29 March 2001.