

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 44/009/2005

UA 134/05

Health concern/Forcible return/Fear for safety/Fear of torture

20 May 2005

NIGERIA

Florencio Ela Bibang (m)

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Felipe Esono Ntumu (m)

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Equatorial Guinea nationals

Antimo Edu (m)

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Florencio Ela Bibang is reportedly ill with diabetes and requires medical treatment, which he is reportedly being denied. He is being held incommunicado along with Felipe Esono Ntumu and Antimo Edu at the Nigeria Army Intelligence Authority in Lagos. The three men are at risk of being forcibly returned to Equatorial Guinea, where they could be held incommunicado without charge or trial and where they could be tortured.

Florencio Ela Bibang, Felipe Esono Ntumu, and Antimo Edu were arrested at sea near the frontier between Cameroon and Nigerian by the Nigerian authorities at the end of April 2005. They were apparently trying to reach Benin by canoe from Cameroon.

Florencio Ela Bibang and Felipe Esono Ntumu had fled Equatorial Guinea in October 2004 and were asylum seekers in Cameroon. Antimo Edu, a former soldier in the Equatorial Guinea army, had fled to Gabon where he was granted refugee status several years earlier. Due to the insecurity in Gabon, he recently went to Cameroon where he met Florencio Ela Bibang and Felipe Esono Ntumu. Fearing for their safety in Cameroon, the three men apparently decided to move to Benin and ask for asylum there.

Former Lt-Col Florencio Ela Bibang and military officer Felipe Esono Ntumu, fled from Equatorial Guinea to Cameroon in or around 12 October 2004 following the arrest of scores of soldiers and former soldiers whom the Equatorial Guinea authorities accused of plotting a coup. Florencio Ela Bibang had been a deputy Armed Forces inspector. He was sacked following the arrest of General Agustin Ona, the Armed Forces Inspector and uncle of President Obiang, as well as dozens of military officers in November - December 2003. At that time, some officers fled to Gabon and Cameroon and others to Spain. In October 2004, Lt-Col Florencio Ela Bibang was accused of being in contact with one of the officers who fled to Spain in 2003, and of plotting with him to overthrow the government. It appears that military officer, first fled to Gabon, and from there went to Cameroon as Gabon is increasingly considered unsafe by Equatorial Guinea refugees.

Since October 2004, Florencio Ela Bibang's wife, other members of his family and friends have been reportedly imprisoned without charge or trial and have reportedly been tortured in Equatorial Guinea.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Amnesty International has on several occasions been informed of the abduction by Equatorial Guinea security personnel of Equatorial Guinea refugees in neighbouring countries. In January 2005, three people were reportedly abducted from Benin, including Juan Ondo Abaga, who had been in exile in this country for 8 years. He is currently held incommunicado at Black Beach prison in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:**

- expressing concern for the safety of Florencio Ela Bibang, Felipe Esono Ntumu, and Antimo Edu, who are being held incommunicado at the Nigeria Army Intelligence Authority in Lagos;
- calling for Florencio Ela Bibang, Felipe Esono Ntumu, and Antimo Edu to be granted access to a lawyer and for Florencio Ela Bibang to be given medical treatment he requires;
- asking the authorities to release them immediately, unless they charge them with a recognisably criminal offence;

- calling for them not be tortured or ill-treated while in detention, as the Nigerian Constitution states in section 34 that “every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person, and accordingly- (a) no person shall be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment.”
- urging that they be held in conditions which conform to international standards for the treatment of prisoners;
- calling on the authorities not to forcibly return Florencio Ela Bibang, Felipe Esono Ntumu, and Antimo Edu to Equatorial Guinea, where they would be at risk of torture, as well as indefinite detention without charge or trial;
- reminding the Nigerian authorities of their obligations under the 1969 Organisation of African Unity Refugee Convention, and customary international law, not to forcibly return anyone to a country where they are at risk of serious human rights abuses such as torture;
- calling on the authorities to protect these three men against attempts to abduct them.

**APPEALS TO:**

Honourable Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice  
Chief Akinlolu Olujinmi  
Attorney-General’s Chambers  
Federal Secretariat Complex  
10th floor, Shehu Shagari Way  
PMB 192 Abuja  
Nigeria

**Fax: +234 9 5235208**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of Nigeria accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 1 July 2005.