

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 38/001/2001

July 2001

## **PORTUGAL: THE ALLEGED ILL-TREATMENT IN POLICE CUSTODY OF CÂNDIDO VENTURA COELHO**

Amnesty International is concerned about the alleged ill-treatment in police custody of Cândido Ventura Coelho at the *Polícia de Segurança Pública* (PSP) station of Damaia, near Lisbon, on 27 December 2000. The following summary is based on reports received by Amnesty International.

On 27 December 2000, at about 1pm, Cândido Ventura Coelho, 20 years old, and José Carlos Ventura Coelho, 17 years old, of Mozambican origin, were crossing a bridge when they were stopped by two plainclothes police officers. The police officers checked their identity documents and reportedly asked them to show their "syringes", while searching their pockets, thus implying that they suspected Cândido Coelho and José Coelho to be drug addicts or traffickers. Cândido Coelho and José Coelho protested that they did not have any syringes. They were then ordered to follow the police officers to the police station of Damaia.

At the police station Cândido Coelho and José Coelho were once again identified and interrogated. During the interrogation, Cândido Coelho, who suffers from a mental disability, about which the interrogating officers were told by José Coelho, replied inaccurately to questions regarding his age. Cândido Coelho and José Coelho asked to make a phone call to their family, but this was refused.

After a while, Cândido Coelho was taken to a toilet inside the police station by one of the police officers, who reportedly assaulted him. It is alleged that the police officer firstly gave Cândido Coelho a hard push, as a result of which he hit his head against a wall. Then the police officer kicked him and punched him several times on the face, until another police officer intervened to stop him.

As a result of the aggression, Cândido Coelho sustained haematomas around the eye, with discharges. There were scratch marks on his neck and he complained of aches in the upper part of his body.

Following his release, Cândido Coelho was taken to the hospital of Amadora-Sintra, close to Lisbon, by one of his brothers. On the registration card they declared that the haematomas were the result of an assault by a police officer at the PSP station of Damaia, and this was recorded by the hospital officer in charge of the registration.

On the following day, 28 December 2000, Cândido Ventura Coelho, accompanied by a relative, went back to the PSP station of Damaia to lodge a complaint about the assault. An investigation was opened by the *Polícia Judiciária*. On 4 January 2001, the *Polícia Judiciária* invited Cândido Coelho for a medical examination and informed him that he would be called again to identify his aggressor.

The investigation into the circumstances of the assault is continuing. At this stage proceedings are sub-judice.