

EXTERNAL

AI INDEX NUMBER: EUR 38/03/92

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4 September 1992

PORTUGAL: THE ALLEGED ILL-TREATMENT OF LUIS GRAVANITA

Alexandre Luis Marques Pires GRAVANITA, a 19-year-old student, born in Angola and studying at the University of Setúbal, alleged that on 6 December 1991 he was severely beaten and subjected to racial insults by an officer of the Public Security Police (Policia de Segurança Publica - PSP) in a police station in Setúbal. Amnesty International is concerned about his allegations of ill-treatment and is seeking information from the authorities about the case.

On 10 December 1991 Luis Gravanita made a formal complaint to the Public Prosecutor against a PSP officer whom he named as Jorge Manuel Cruz da Silva of the Esquadra de Transito (traffic unit). In his complaint he stated that at 7pm on 6 December he was attempting to cross the road at a pedestrian crossing on the corner of Avenida 22 de Dezembro and Avenida dos Combatentes in Setúbal. He was on his way home from a training session in a local gymnasium and was carrying a sports bag. A PSP officer, whom he later identified as Jorge Silva, shouted at him to wait. The officer then asked to see his identity card and, after examining it, ordered Luis Gravanita to accompany him to the nº 1 Police Station [Esquadra nº 1]. Luis Gravanita claimed that on route to the station he explained to the officer that it was most inconvenient for him to have to go there and asked him the reason for the order. The officer told him that it would all be explained to him once they had reached the station. On arrival, they went to an interior room where Luis Gravanita was ordered to leave his bag, containing his sports clothes, on the table. After he had done this, the PSP officer immediately assaulted him, punching and kicking him. At the same time he was shouting "You worthless piece of Angolan shit", "You are nothing" and "You are a worthless nigger" ("Tu não vales nada, Angolano de merda!", "Tu não és nada!", "Tu és um preto!"). Amnesty International has been informed that Luis Gravanita is a Portuguese citizen who is not black. He was born in Angola and left the country as a small child.

During the assault, Luis Gravanita pleaded with the officer not to hit him in the mouth because a few months previously he had suffered a serious fracture of the jaw after being hit with an iron bar. The officer allegedly ignored him.

At one point the officer pushed him violently against the wall and opened the bag on the table. Luis Gravanita explained that the bag only contained his sports clothes and that he had just come from a gymnasium. In reply the officer called him a "shitty pig" [Seu porco de merda] and threw the clothes into the air and continued assaulting him.

Finally Luis Gravanita was taken to the guichet (a window behind which the duty officer sits) and gave the details on his identity card, his home address and profession. No information as to why he had been ordered to go to the station and assaulted there was ever given. Luis Gravanita was not accused of any offence.

According to his statement, immediately after this and while they were still in the station, the PSP officer, Jorge Silva, verbally threatened Luis Gravanita by saying "Look out! If I see you on the street again and you have the back luck to pass by me, you will be in trouble. If you see me in the street, cross over to the other side!" [Ai de ti que eu te veja na rua, se tens o azar de passar por mim estas lixado comigo! Se me vires na rua passa para o outro passeio!].

After his identity card had been returned, Luis Gravanita went back to the gymnasium where he was seen by witnesses before returning home. His parents then took him to the Emergency Services of the São Bernardo District Hospital in Setúbal. The hospital diagnosed general cuts and bruising, especially to the face and right eye, consistent with having received punches.

On 10 December 1991 Luis Gravanita made a formal complaint against the PSP officer alleging that Jorge Silva wilfully caused him bodily injuries and menaced him [crimes de ofensas corporais voluntária injúria e ameaças].

