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Equatorial Guinea: Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Equatorial Guinea: Amnesty International urges action to end torture, secret detention and enforced disappearances

Amnesty International welcomes Equatorial Guinea's engagement with the Universal Periodic Review and its support for a number of important recommendations,¹ including:

- to end torture and ill-treatment;
- to end incommunicado and secret detention and enforced disappearances;
- to end the practice of abducting Equatorial Guineans exiled in neighbouring countries and secretly transferring them to places of detention in Equatorial Guinea; and
- to bring perpetrators of such human rights violations to justice.

These recommendations are particularly pertinent in light of reports of the abduction from Benin in late January 2010 of four Equatorial Guineans by agents acting behalf of the Equatorial Guinean authorities. The former soldiers had left Equatorial Guinea in the early 1990s and were living in Benin, where they have refugee status. According to sources in Equatorial Guinea, the men were taken to the Black Beach prison, in Equatorial Guinea's capital, Malabo, where they were believed to be held incommunicado and to have been tortured.

Amnesty International acknowledges the decrease, over the past two years, in reported instances of torture. The practice, however, continues and only one medium-ranking police officer appears to have been prosecuted for such crimes.

The organization welcomes Equatorial Guinea's support for recommendations to end arbitrary arrest and detention and improve conditions of detention.² It acknowledges the resumption of family visits, as well as recent visits to places of detention by the ICRC, and urges the government to allow immediate access to places of detention for lawyers and national and international human rights monitors, including the UN Special Rapporteur on torture.

Amnesty International notes that Equatorial Guinea agreed to consider a further 28 recommendations, including:

- to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture;³ the International Convention on Enforced Disappearance;⁴ and the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR, and
- to abolish the death penalty.⁵

¹ A/HRC/13/16, paragraph 70, recommendations 34-39 (USA, UK, Spain, Switzerland, Canada, Chile) and recommendations 27-29 (Italy, France and Ghana). Other relevant recommendations include recommendation 17 (Argentina) and 40 (the Netherlands).

² Ibid, paragraph 70, recommendations 30-33 (Germany, Czech Republic, Azerbaijan and Switzerland).

³ Ibid paragraph 71, recommendation 1 (UK, France, Chile, Czech Republic, Spain, Argentina).

⁴ Ibid paragraph 71, recommendations 5 and 6 (France and Argentina).

⁵ Ibid paragraph 71 recommendations 16-22 (Slovenia, Argentina, Sweden, Spain, Azerbaijan, France and Italy).

Amnesty International encourages Equatorial Guinea to support these recommendations.

It welcomes Equatorial Guinea's support for recommendations to respect freedom of expression, association and assembly, including of political opponents,⁶ and calls on the government to reconsider its rejection of the recommendation to allow political parties and the media to operate freely.⁷

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Equatorial Guinea on 19 March 2010 during the 13th session. Prior to the adoption of the report of the review Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above. Amnesty International also contributed to the information basis for the review through its submission on Equatorial Guinea: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR24/002/2009/en>

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⁶ Ibid, paragraph 70, recommendations 55 (Canada), 56 (Netherlands), 58 (Spain), 59 (Switzerland).

⁷ Ibid, paragraph 72.