

PUBLIC

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Fear of forced evictions/ fear of use of excessive force

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Over 360 families

Over 360 families are at risk of being forcibly evicted from their homes in several neighbourhoods in Malabo, the capital, and many may be left homeless during the rainy season. The families have been given 15 days to vacate their homes before they are demolished between 15 and 30 November 2006. Amnesty International fears that police and military personnel may use excessive force to evict these families.

Amnesty International is concerned that these families have not been given adequate notice of the eviction. The authorities have not consulted the affected communities. The communities have not been offered adequate alternative accommodation or compensation, nor have they been given the opportunity to contest the evictions in court.

On 7 November, national radio and television issued an official statement regarding the government urban rehabilitation programme, in which people in several neighbourhoods were ordered to vacate their homes within 15 days. The neighbourhoods mentioned included: Mendoza, Obras Públicas, Cuatro Ases and La Paz, all in central Malabo; Samu, on the outskirts of Malabo; and La Vigatana, a community (*Consejo de Poblado*) just outside Malabo. The previous day, 6 November, three officials from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Urban Development (*Ministerio de Infraestructura y Urbanismo*) visited these neighbourhoods, apparently taking measurements of land and houses. The officials told residents that they had to vacate the area within 15 days.

There was a further announcement on national radio on 10 November following a meeting of the interministerial council, when it was announced that the demolitions of homes would start from 15 to 30 November 2006. The authorities asked people to vacate their homes beforehand.

In the Obras Públicas neighbourhood, 40 of the approximately 115 affected families started to vacate their government-owned homes on 13 November, apparently in order to avoid possible confrontation with the police if they were found in their homes after 15 November. Some of these families have moved in temporarily with relatives or friends; others do not have a place to go.

Residents in La Vigatana, where 250 families are at risk, received an official order to vacate their homes on 6 October 2006 and were given 90 days to do so. There were no further communications to these families until 6 November, when officials came to measure up the neighbourhood, followed by the radio announcements on 7 and 10 November. Following receipt of the notification on 6 October, some residents wrote to the authorities in order to start negotiations about alternative accommodation and compensation. However, to date, they have received no response.

It is not known how many families in the other neighbourhoods at risk are facing forced eviction.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Equatorial Guinea is Africa's third main producer of oil, producing about 400,000 barrels per day. The new wealth brought by the oil boom has led to pressure on the land for commercial purposes, as well as luxury housing. The authorities have embarked on a programme of reconstruction of the country's main cities and infrastructure. According to reports, the authorities have on several occasions publicly expressed their intention to end "*chabolismo*" (shanty towns). However, sources suggest that many of the houses demolished in the last two or three years were solid structures in well-established neighbourhoods and the

vast majority of the occupants had titles to the land.

In July 2006, about 300 families were forcibly evicted and had their homes demolished in the neighbourhoods of Atepa and Camaremy, along the road joining Malabo airport to the municipality of Ela Nguema, apparently to make room for a new road. As is the case with the current evictions, the residents were not notified or consulted prior to the evictions and they did not have an opportunity to contest the authorities' decisions in court. They have not yet been compensated, including for the loss of their homes or other property which was deliberately destroyed during the evictions. Some residents who resisted the evictions were pushed and hit by soldiers who accompanied the demolition teams. One resident was arrested and briefly detained.

On 4 September 2006, in response to a question from a parliamentarian, the Prime Minister publicly told parliament that forced evictions would never happen again; that people would never be left homeless and that they would always be offered alternative accommodation.

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

- expressing concern that over 360 families are at imminent risk of being forcibly evicted from their homes;
- saying that forced evictions, carried out without due process, have been recognised by the UN Commission on Human Rights as a gross violation of a range of human rights; in particular, the right to adequate housing;
- calling on the authorities to stop all forced evictions and put in place safeguards, which should include adequate notification, information, and consultation with residents of the areas affected; the provision of adequate alternative accommodation and compensation; and the right to contest forced evictions in court;
- calling on the authorities to call a halt to all planned forced evictions until these safeguards are in place.

APPEALS TO:

President

General Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo
Presidente de la República
Gabinete del Presidente de la República, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea
Fax: +240 09 3313/ 3334
Salutation: Excelencia/Your Excellency

Prime Minister

Sr Don Ricardo Mangue Obama Nfube
Primer Ministro
Gabinete del Primer Ministro
Palacio del Pueblo, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea
Fax: +240 09 3313
Salutation: Sr Primer Ministro/Dear Prime Minister

Minister of Infrastructure and Urban Development

Sr Don Miguel Nsue Micha
Ministro de Infraestructura y Desarrollo Urbano
Ministerio de Infraestructura y Desarrollo Urbano, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea
Fax: +240 09 3313
Salutation: Sr Ministro/Dear Minister

Minister of Interior and Local Corporations (councils)

Sr. Don Clemente Engonga Nguema Onguene
Ministro del Interior y Corporaciones Locales
Ministerio del Interior y Corporaciones Locales, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea
Fax: +240 09 240 09 2683/2688/ 3406
Salutation: Sr. Ministro/Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Sr Don Pastor Micha Ondo Bile
Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

Fax: +240 09 3132/ 2320

President of the Parliamentary Human Rights Commission

Sr Don Salomón Nguema Owono

Presidente de la Cámara de Representantes del Pueblo y de la

Comisión de Derechos Humanos de la Cámara de Representantes del Pueblo

Cámara de Representantes del Pueblo, Avenida de la Independencia s/n

Apartado 51, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea

Fax: + 240 09 3313

and to diplomatic representatives of Equatorial Guinea accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 December 2006.