

EXTERNAL

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Fear of torture / Possible prisoners
of conscience

23 January 1998

EQUATORIAL GUINEA Víctor Buyaban, teacher - and his wife (name unknown)

Father Eduardo Losoa, Roman Catholic priest

Carmelo Iriri

Juan Loeri, director of studies of the School of Agriculture

Marcelo Lohoso, parliamentarian

Cristino Meda Seriche

Aurelio Losoa

Florencio Sicoco

Anastasio Copoboru

"Ebulabate" (no other name known)

And others

An unknown number of people are being held incommunicado by the security forces following their arrest on 21 and 22 January 1998 in various locations around Equatorial Guinea's Bioko Island. They are feared to be at risk of torture and ill-treatment, which are routine in Equatorial Guinea. All the detainees are Bubi, the ethnic group native to Bioko Island, and some may have been detained solely on account of their ethnic origin.

Víctor Buyaban was arrested at midday on 21 January at the school where he works in Malabo, the capital of Equatorial Guinea, and beaten with rifles by the arresting officers. His wife, whose name is not yet known to Amnesty International, had been arrested earlier and taken to the school to force Víctor Buyaban to give himself up. According to reports, she was also severely beaten.

Father Eduardo Losoa, Juan Loeri, Carmelo Iriri, Marcelo Lohoso, a parliamentarian and member of the ruling *Partido Democrático de Guinea Ecuatorial* (PDGE), Equatorial Guinea Democratic Party, and Cristino Meda Seriche, until recently director of the Prime Minister's office, were arrested on 22 January, also in Malabo. All are being held at Malabo police station.

Aurelio Losoa, who has been arrested on several occasions before, Florencio Sicoco, Anastasio Copoboru and another man known as "Ebulabate", were arrested in Rebola, about eight kilometres (km) west of Malabo, and taken to Malabo police station.

Amnesty International has received information that an unknown number of Bubi have also been arrested in Luba, Bioko's second town, about 70km southeast of Malabo, Moka, about 75km south of Malabo, and Bahó Grande, 45km southeast of Malabo.

The arrests followed attacks on military barracks in Luba, Moka and Bahó Grande in the early hours of 21 January, which reportedly left eight soldiers and one civilian dead and several other soldiers wounded. The government claims that the attacks were carried out by members of the *Movimiento para la Autodeterminación de la Isla de Bioko* (MAIB), Movement for the self-determination of Bioko Island, a Bubi political party. According to government reports, three of the alleged attackers have been captured. Amnesty International has not been able to confirm this and does not know where the three are being held.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Bubi ethnic group continues to face discrimination from the Equatorial Guinean authorities. Since Equatorial Guinea's independence from Spain in 1968 many Bubi people have been killed and arrested for expressing their desire to be independent.

The MAIB, founded in November 1994 by the Bubi ethnic group to achieve independence for Bioko Island, is widely supported by the Bubi. To Amnesty International's knowledge, the MAIB, which has never been legalized, has not used violence before its alleged involvement in the attacks of 21 January. Since its creation hundreds of people belonging to the Bubi ethnic group have been arrested on suspicion of supporting or belonging to the MAIB. Seldom has the government presented any evidence to that effect.

Legislative elections are due in Equatorial Guinea this year. On 15 January President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo dismissed the government. A new government has been appointed.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- seeking assurances that none of the detainees, arrested on 21 and 22 January 1998, will be subjected to torture or ill-treatment;
- calling for them to have immediate access to their families, legal council and medical attention;
- expressing concern that some of the detainees may have been arrested solely for being members of the Bubi ethnic group and calling for them to be released unless promptly charged with recognizable criminal offences;
- expressing concern that Víctor Buyaban and his wife were severely beaten at the time of the arrest and calling for these reports to be investigated with a view to bringing those responsible to justice.

APPEALS TO:

President
 Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo
 Presidente de la República
 Gabinete del Presidente de la República
 Malabo, República de Guinea Ecuatorial
Faxes: +240 9 3313
Telexes: 5405 GBNOM 5405 EG
Telegrams: Presidente Obiang, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea
Salutation: Excelencia/Your Excellency

Prime Minister
 Serafín Seriche Dougan
 Primer Ministro
 Gabinete del Primer Ministro
 Malabo, República de Guinea Ecuatorial
Telexes: 5405 GBNOM 5405 EG
Telegrams: Primer Ministro Seriche Dougan, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea
Salutation: Excelencia/Your Excellency

Secretary of State for Security
 Coronel Manuel Nguema Mba
 Secretario de Estado para la Seguridad Nacional
Telexes: 5405 GBNOM 5405 EG

Telegrams: Primer Ministro Seriche Dougan, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea
Salutation: Excelencia/Your Excellency

COPIES 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 5 March 1998.