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**Guinea: Amnesty International launches a solemn appeal to President Conté following the wave of arrests during the election**

On the eve of President Lansana Conté's swearing in on 29 January, Amnesty International deplores the arrest of hundreds of people during the presidential campaign and election which led to the disputed victory of President Conté in December 1998.

Some of these individuals have now been released but to date several political leaders as well as members of the parliamentary opposition continue to be held in detention without charge or trial.

The organisation solemnly appeals to President Lansana Conté to free all these political prisoners and to prosecute all those responsible for torture and ill treatment.

"Many people have been tortured in secret detention centres, including Camp Boiro of sinister memory, where hundreds of prisoners died during the rule of former Guinean President, Ahmed Sékou Touré", declares the human rights organisation.

Arrests began before the presidential poll and continued after the results were announced. They were principally directed at leaders and activists of the African Democratic Party of Guinea (*Parti démocratique africain de Guinée - PDAG*) and the Guinean People's Rally (*Rassemblement du peuple de Guinée - RPG*). The leaders of these two parties, **Marcel Cros** and **Alpha Condé** were arrested on the day after the presidential election in Conakry and Lola.

Alpha Condé, of the RPG, a candidate in the presidential election, was accused by the authorities of wishing to leave Guinea illegally and of seeking to recruit troops to destabilise the country. Marcel Cros, President of the PDGA is accused of illegal possession of firearms. These two, along with other opposition activists are being held in the detention centre at Conakry.

Opposition members of Parliament and local government councillors, including Madame **Koumbafing Keita**, **Mamady Yo Kouyaté**, Madame **Ramatoulaye Diallo** as well as other elected

officials and leaders of the RPG, were also apprehended and detained without charge or trial in the civil prison of Kankan.

Amnesty International demands the immediate and unconditional release of these political prisoners. The organization also demands a fair trial for those who have committed a criminal offence.

Information received by the organization provides evidence of cases of torture and ill treatment at the time of arrest of opposition activists. Members of the security forces held certain activists on the ground, stamping on their hands and feet before beating them. Some of them received up to 50 truncheon blows twice in the same day.

Following this ill treatment, one of those apprehended between 21 and 22 December and taken to the Alpha Yaya Diallo Camp at Conakry died of wounds he received. No inquest has been held on the circumstances of his death.

Torture and ill treatment are common currency in Guinea, particularly in the days following an individual's arrest. These practices take place with full impunity.

Last October, **El Hadj Biro Diallo**, President of the National Assembly was suspended from the Unity and Progress Party (*Parti de l'unité et du progres* – PUP), the party in power, after having denounced the human rights situation in Guinea. He condemned recourse to torture and ill treatment designed to extract confessions and exhorted President Conté to take preventive measures.

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