

EXTERNAL

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Fear for Safety

16 May 1996

GUINEA-BISSAU Fernando Gomes, human rights activist

Fernando Gomes, President of the *Liga Guineense de Direitos do Homem*, Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League, has recently received threats against his physical integrity. These threats are connected with recent press statements issued by the League expressing concern that the Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau, Manuel Saturnino da Costa, had assaulted citizens.

Fernando Gomes has been receiving threats since 17 April 1996, when the League published a report of the first such assault which had taken place on 16 April 1996; the League's report also made reference to a previous incident in 1995.

The League published another statement on 7 May reporting the threats made against Fernando Gomes. On 16 May, the League announced that it had learned of a similar incident which had occurred on 4 May 1996.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Fernando Gomes has received threats on previous occasions, for example in April 1993 he was threatened after the League expressed concern that political prisoners accused of attempting to overthrow the government had been denied access to lawyers and relatives. He received more threats in October and November 1994 and his car was set on fire. The Interior Ministry had accused the League of stating, in one of their regular radio programs of civic education, that prisoners accused of armed robbery had been released. The League denied making such a statement.

Amnesty International has obtained independent corroboration of the reported assault on 16 April. It is continuing to make inquiries and is expressing its concern directly to the Government of Guinea-Bissau. Amnesty International has previously expressed concern about the government's failure to investigate a similar incident in 1994 involving the then Minister of Education, Fernando Delfim da Silva.

The League is planning to hold a march through the capital, Bissau, on 25 May 1996, to call for an end to such incidents and for those responsible to be brought to justice.

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

- expressing concern about the reported threats against Fernando Gomes' physical integrity;
- calling for a public government announcement to the effect that such threats are a crime which will not be tolerated and that the perpetrators will be brought to justice;
- seeking assurances that the League will be able to continue its legitimate human rights activities without fear of intimidation by the authorities.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic
Sua Excelência João Bernardo Vieira

Presidente da República
Gabinete do Presidente da República
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Bissau
República da Guiné-Bissau
Fax: + 245 20 20 07
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Telegrams: Presidente Vieira, Bissau, Guiné-Bissau
Salutation: Excelência

Ombudsman
Exmo. Sr. Inspector-Geral do Estado
Ministério do Interior
Avenida de Unidade Africana
Bissau
República da Guiné-Bissau
Telegrams: Inspector-Geral do Estado, Bissau, Guine-Bissau
Salutation: Exmo. Senhor

Minister of Justice
Sua Excelência Daniel Ferreira
Ministro da Justiça
Ministério de Justiça
Avenida Amílcar Cabral
Bissau
República da Guiné-Bissau
Telegrams: Ministro Daniel Ferreira, Bissau, Guine-Bissau
Salutation: Excelência

COPIES TO:

President of Journalists' Association
Presidente da Associação dos Jornalistas da Guiné-Bissau
Sede da AJGB
Bissau
República da Guiné-Bissau

Director of National Radio
Director da Radiodifusão Nacional
da República da Guiné-Bissau
CP 191
Bissau
República da Guiné-Bissau

and to diplomatic representatives of Guinea-Bissau accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 28 June 1996.