

PUBLIC

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Fear for safety/fear of torture

GUINEA-BISSAU

**Allen Yéro Embalo (m), journalist
Alberto Dabo (m), journalist
Eva Maria Auzenda Biague (f), journalist
Fernando Jorge Perreira (m), journalist
Mario Sa Gomes (m), human rights defender**

The four journalists named above have gone into hiding after threats from the military after they reported on the way Guinea-Bissau is being used as a transit point by drug-smugglers. If detained by the military, they would be at risk of torture. Human rights defender Mario Sa Gomes, who publicly called for civilian and military officials involved in the drug trade to be dismissed, has gone into hiding in fear for his life.

The journalists, who work for the BBC, Radio France International and Agence France Presse, published reports implicating high-ranking civilian and military officials in the drug trafficking. Military officials went on national radio demanding that Allen Yéro Embalo and Alberto Dabo speak on national radio to retract the reports. When they failed to do this, military officials made another announcement demanding they, and also Eva Maria Auzenda Biague and Fernando Jorge Perreira, report to the nearest police station. All four went into hiding shortly afterwards.

Mario Sa Gomes, who works for the national NGO Human Rights League of Guinea-Bissau, had stated on national radio on 11 July that the most effective way of tackling drug trafficking in the country was to immediately dismiss all the civilian and military officials who were implicated. The chief of the army demanded a public apology, which Mario Sa Gomes refused to give, and then issued a warrant for his arrest. He went into hiding shortly afterwards, fearing for his life.

Following the United Nations 2007 World Drug Report naming Guinea-Bissau as a major trafficking and transit point for cocaine, the four journalists published various reports implicating high-ranking civilian and military officials in the drug-trafficking. It is as a result of these reports that they have received threats from the military. There are no prisons in the country and if captured the journalists and human rights defender will be held in military installations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Republic of Guinea-Bissau is a former Portuguese colony, which gained independence in 1973. The first multi-party elections were held in 1994. Since then there have been military-led coups in 1998 and September 2003. The death of the head of the armed forces due to a mutiny of military factions in October 2004 caused widespread unrest in the country. In June 2005, presidential elections were held for the first time since the September 2003 coup.

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

- expressing concern that journalists Allen Yéro Embalo, Alberto Dabo, Eva Maria Auzenda Biague and Fernando Jorge Perreira, and also human rights defender Mario Sa Gomes, have been threatened by army officers because of their work;
- expressing concern that if captured they would be at risk of torture and even death;
- calling for a prompt and impartial investigation, with the results made public, and for the officers involved to be suspended from duty until legal proceedings are completed.

APPEALS TO:

Procurator General

Exmo. Sr. Dr. Fernando Jorge Ribeiro
Procurador Geral da República
Procuradoria Geral
Avenida Amílcar Cabral
Bissau
República da Guiné-Bissau
Fax: +245 20 39 24
Salutation: Excelência/Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

Justice Minister

Sua Excelência Carmelita Barbosa Rodrigues Pires
Ministra da Justiça
Ministério de Justiça
Avenida Amílcar Cabral
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República da Guiné-Bissau
Fax: +245 202 185
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Minister of Interior

Sua Excelência Baciro Dabó
Ministro da Administração Interna
Ministério da Administração Interna
Avenida da Unidade Africana
Bissau
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Fax: +245 201 671
Salutation: Excelência/Your Excellency

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 26 September 2007.