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**£SENEGAL: @TORTURE ESCALATES IN SOUTH, EXTRAJUDICIAL  
EXECUTIONS REPORTED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN RECENT YEARS**

Torture of suspected government opponents is escalating in southern Senegal and detailed reports of extrajudicial executions of unarmed civilians have emerged for the first time since 1983, Amnesty International said today.

"We know of at least 11 prisoners who appear to have been tortured to death in the past six months," the organization said. "Soldiers have attacked and killed unarmed civilians -- one pregnant woman was even beaten with rubber batons and later miscarried her baby."

The abuses have escalated in the last six months as the government has faced increased violence by the main armed opposition group seeking independence for Senegal's Casamance region, the Mouvement des forces democratiques de la Casamance, (MFDC), Movement of Casamance's Democratic Forces. Armed attacks on civilians and members of the armed forces have been reported.

"The government appears to have given the security forces a virtual 'blank cheque' to torture and kill in the Casamance region in response to attacks by armed opponents," Amnesty International said. "It denied that torture had ever occurred when we released our first report on the Casamance in May 1990 and has done nothing since to prevent or investigate such abuses."

Hundreds of people have fled the Casamance area as a result of the violence there. Amnesty International has interviewed dozens of refugees, victims of abuses and their relatives over the past year.

Many suspected rebels or rebel sympathizers have been tortured, regardless of age or gender, to make them confess or in retaliation for rebel actions. Hundreds have been arbitrarily arrested because they are related by family to rebels or were denounced to the authorities by political rivals.

"For the first time in recent years, we have received detailed reports of a number of extrajudicial executions in Senegal," Amnesty International said. "It is highly disturbing. The reports we have received come only from a few places but as a much larger area has been affected by unrest and the government's counter-insurgency operations, the real scale of abuse could be a lot greater."

In one case in September 1990, several dozen soldiers reportedly gathered all the men in Kanaw village and forced them to lie face down on the ground, beating some of them. Then, according to eye witnesses interviewed by Amnesty International, the soldiers took away five men whose bodies were later found in a rice field.

At least 11 people have reportedly died in custody as a result of torture since May. One 58-year-old farmer is said to have been beaten to death by police in October apparently because his children were suspected rebels. He had left his village in June to seek refuge in the Gambia but was forced to return to Senegal by the Gambian security forces.

Since June, hundreds of people have been arrested in Casamance and other parts of Senegal in connection with the activities of the Casamance rebels. At least 300 have been charged with offences against state security. Amnesty International is concerned that some of them may have been tortured or ill-treated in custody and that others may be prisoners of conscience.

Amnesty International is repeating its call for immediate, impartial investigations of all reports of torture and is urging the government to investigate alleged extrajudicial executions and prevent further abuses.

**EMBARGOED FOR 0001 HRS GMT THURSDAY 10 JANUARY 1991**

