

PUBLIC

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MEDICAL ACTION

Torture / lack of medical care for several detainees Guinea-Bissau

Key words torture/ill-treatment / lack of medical care / incommunicado detention

Introduction

Amnesty International is seriously concerned for the health of four army officers, who reportedly have been tortured and ill-treated on several occasions. Fode Mandjam, Queita Mané and Almane Alam Camará have been held incommunicado without charge since early November 2002. They are held at Mansoa Army barracks north of the capital Bissau and at Cumeré Army barracks south of the capital. Serifo Baldé, the fourth officer, is in a coma at the air base military hospital, reportedly as a result of torture.

Another officer, Mussá Cassamá died in detention on 9 March 2003, reportedly as a result of torture. His body had markings around his ankles and left shoulder which allegedly were caused by torture.¹ An autopsy was not carried out.

Furthermore, Amnesty International would like to bring attention to the case of Ernesto Carvalho, vice-president of the political party Unidade Nacional (National Unity). Ernesto Carvalho was arrested on 28 December 2002 and accused of involvement in a plot to overthrow the government. He is being held incommunicado at the main police station in Bissau, *Segunda Esquadra* (Second Squadron), without charge. He reportedly had abdominal surgery several months before his arrest and still requires check-ups. He reportedly is quite weak and has missed one check-up so far.

Background information

All these detainees have reportedly been accused of plotting to overthrow the government of President Kumba Ialá and have been denied access to their families, lawyers, human rights organizations and have been denied medical treatment. The military officers mentioned above reportedly have been beaten whilst bound at the arms and legs. Almane Alam Camará has had his beard burnt.

Since late 2000, hundreds of military officers who had criticised President Kumba Ialá have been subjected to persecution and arrest. Many have been accused of plotting to overthrow the government, though the authorities have failed to substantiate their accusations.

Those named above were previously imprisoned as part of a group of about 120 military officers arrested in November 2000. They were accused of attempting to overthrow the government and were held in harsh conditions, sometimes in incommunicado detention, without charge until their release on

¹ Also see *BBC News*, "Bissau coup plotters 'tortured'" (18 March): <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/2860915.stm>

bail in May and June 2001. All the accused had the charges against them dropped, except Almane Alam Camará and eight others, who were tried in June and July 2002. Almane Alam Camará received a three-year suspended prison sentence. During their trial, no evidence was presented in court to substantiate the charges against them.

Amnesty International has previously taken up cases of detainees held since November 2000 in medical actions (see AFR 30/005/2001, 28 February 2001 and AFR 30/006/2001, 24 May 2001).

Recommendations

Please write letters in Portuguese or your own language to the authorities below, using professionally-headed paper if you use this in your profession:

- introducing yourself in your professional capacity and/or as a member of Amnesty International;
- expressing concern at reports of torture and ill-treatment of Fode Mandjam, Queita Mané and Almande Alam Camará, held at Mansoa and Cumeré Army barracks, and Serifo Baldé, currently in hospital at the air base military hospital;
- urging the authorities to provide them with access to appropriate medical treatment and to ensure that they will not be subjected to further ill-treatment;
- expressing concern for the death of Mussá Cassamá in detention, apparently as a result of torture, and calling for a prompt and thorough investigation into his death;
- expressing concern that Ernesto Carvalho, held incommunicado and without charge at *Segunda Esquadra*, has not had access to the medical treatment he requires following an operation several months ago;
- calling on the authorities to grant the men above and others held immediate access to their families and lawyers and to unconditionally release them unless charged with a recognisable criminal offence.

Addresses

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Salutations: Excelência / Your Excellency

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Copies of appeals

Please send copies of your appeals to diplomatic representatives of Guinea-Bissau accredited to your country.

If you receive no reply from the government or other recipients within six weeks of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow-up letter seeking a response, referring to your previous letter(s). Please check with the medical team if you are sending appeals after 31 May 2003, and send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat (att: medical team).

Monitoring of actions

If you have access to e-mail you can help our attempt to monitor letter writing actions. If you write one, two or more letters please send us an e-mail and let us know. Please write in the subject line of your e-mail the index number of the action and the number of letters you write e.g. AFR 30/007/2003.

Please send your message to medical@amnesty.org

Thank you