

Public

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To: Health professionals
From: Medical office / Africa Program
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MEDICAL ACTION
Medical care urgently needed for over 60 political prisoners
Equatorial Guinea

Key words torture/ill-treatment / ill-health / lack of medical care / unfair trial

Amnesty International's concerns

Felipe Ondó Obiang, one of the leaders of Fuerza Demócrata Republicana (FDR, Democratic Republican Force) in Equatorial Guinea, and about 60 of his supporters, friends and relatives have reportedly been tortured in police custody and are in urgent need of medical care.

Felipe Ondó Obiang and his brother-in-law Emilio Ndong Biyogo were arrested on 14 March 2002 in Malabo on Bioko Island. Their arrest was followed by a wave of arrests of over 140 suspected political opponents -- including civilians, soldiers and former soldiers -- around the country. A number of relatives, friends or neighbours of Felipe Ondó Obiang were arrested. [Guillermo Nguema Elá, a co-founder of the FDR, was arrested on 15 May]. They were charged with attempting to overthrow the government and were tried in a grossly unfair trial between 23 May and 9 June 2002. Sixty-eight of them were found guilty and sentenced to prison terms ranging from six years and eight months to 20 years. Of these, 65 are currently in prison of whom about 60 said that they had been tortured.

They were held in either Bata or Malabo prisons until their trial. They were reportedly held naked at times in small, unventilated cells. During this period they were not allowed to see their families, lawyers or doctors. Furthermore, the place of detention was not always known to their families, raising concern for their safety.

In addition, most of them were severely tortured during their pre-trial detention in order to force them to confess. One method of torture included tying of the arms at the back at elbow level, tying together of the ankles and suspending the victim from a bar attached to the ceiling. Some were then severely beaten on the back, feet and torso. A number of detainees sustained broken arms. Some of them were also tortured during their trial, reportedly to prevent them from retracting their confessions made during previous torture.

During the trial it was reportedly evident that 30 to 35 of the defendants had broken arms and some had difficulty walking. Several detainees asked for medical treatment during the trial. One, Cándido Obiang Abia, said he could not sign the confession extracted from him under torture, because of broken bones in his hands.

Fabián Nsué Nguema Obono, a lawyer and secretary general of the opposition political party, Unión Popular (Popular Union), was arrested on 19 April 2002. He was accused of defaming the head of state. He has not yet been tried. Apparently, he was to be a defence lawyer for some of the prisoners mentioned above and this appears to be the main reason for his arrest. According to reports, he was severely tortured and sustained two broken wrists for which he has not received medical treatment. Furthermore, the conditions of his imprisonment are the same as for the other prisoners mentioned above.

Amnesty International has received information about the injuries of a number of the detainees including:

- Felipe Ondó Obiang: he is limping as a result of a wound on one of his legs;
- Donato Ondó Ondó: both of his arms are broken; he has to be fed by fellow prisoners;
- Guillermo Nguema Elá: he has a broken arm and further injuries resulting from beatings;
- Mariano Ekua: both his wrists have been broken; reportedly he was also beaten on the head with a pistol butt by one of the prison guards after he had retracted his confession during the trial;
- Laureano Ondó Monsuy: during the trial he showed wounds on his chest;
- Fabián Nsué Nguema Obono: both his wrists were broken.
- Ovono Akubenga: he has difficulty passing urine.

All prisoners are currently detained at Black Beach prison in Malabo. They have reportedly not received any medical care since their arrest and torture. Furthermore, the conditions of their imprisonment are very harsh. The men are held in small, overcrowded cells without adequate ventilation or light. Nutrition provided in the prison is inadequate and food provided to some of them by their families has reportedly not always reached them. It is believed that they are not allowed to leave their cells at any time.

On 27 June, the prison authorities at Black Beach stopped the families of the prisoners from bringing them food. Two of the men are currently in hospital and many others are reportedly suffering from exhaustion, starvation, and fever. They could die if they do not receive proper food, drink and medical treatment.

Juan Ondó Nguema reportedly complained of severe stomach pains and fainted on 1 July, after allegedly receiving no food and very little water for four days. He was rushed to hospital, where he died on 5 July. Cándido Obiang Abia, who was suffering from fever and exhaustion brought about by starvation was hospitalised on 2 July.

Recommended actions & addresses

Please write letters in Spanish or French or your own language to the authorities listed below, preferably using professionally-headed paper:

- expressing concern at reports of torture of some 60 prisoners currently held in Black Beach prison, including Felipe Ondó Obiang, Donato Ondó Ondó, Guillermo Nguema Elá, Mariano Ekua, Laureano Ondó Monsuy, Fabián Nsué Nguema Obono and Ovono Akubenga;
- expressing concern at the death in hospital of Juan Ondó Nguema and requesting an urgent investigation into his death
- urging the authorities to provide the men with prompt and adequate medical care in accordance with the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners;
- calling on the authorities to improve the conditions in which the men are held, in accordance with the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, including ensuring that they have adequate food, clothing, the opportunity to exercise daily, and reducing overcrowding;
- urging the authorities to open an independent investigation into the torture allegations and to bring perpetrators to justice.

Addresses

President of the Republic
General Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo
Presidente de la República
Gabinete del Presidente de la República
Palacio Tres de Agosto
Malabo
República de Guinea Ecuatorial
fax: + 240 9 3313/3334

Minister of Justice
Sr. Don Rubén Maye Nsue Mangué
Ministro de Justicia y Culto
Ministerio de Justicia y Culto
Malabo
República de Guinea Ecuatorial
Fax: +240 9 2115

Minister of Interior
Sr Don Clemente Ngonga Nguema Andema
Ministro del Interior
Ministerio del Interior
Malabo
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Fax: +240 9 2683/2688

Minister of Health
Sr Don Marcelino Nguema Onguene
Ministro de Sanidad
Ministerio de Sanidad
Malabo
República de Guinea Ecuatorial

Copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Sr Don Santiago Nsobeya Efuman
Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores
Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores
Malabo
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Fax: + 240 9 3132/2320

President of the Parliamentary Human Rights Commission
Sr Don Salomón Nguema Owono
Presidente de la Cámara de Representantes del Pueblo y de la
Comisión de Derechos Humanos de la Cámara de Representantes del Pueblo
CP 51
Malabo
República de Guinea Ecuatorial

and to diplomatic representatives of Equatorial Guinea accredited to your country.

If you receive no reply from the government or other recipients within two months of dispatch of your letter, please send a follow up letter seeking a response, referring to your previous letter(s). Please do not be discouraged by the possible lack of replies to your letters. They are noticed. Please check with the medical team if you are sending appeals after 13 September, and send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat (att: medical team).

Monitoring of action

If you have access to e-mail you can help our attempt to monitor letter-writing actions. If you write one, two, three 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 24/012/2002 - 3 (if you write 3 letters)
Please send your message to medical@amnesty.org Thank you.