

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death penalty

23 June 1995

GUINEA

Sékou Bangoura (m)

On 6 June 1995, Sergeant Sékou Bangoura was sentenced to death by Conakry Assizes Court. Although he still has the right to appeal to a higher court and to petition the President for clemency, President Lansana Conte has reportedly already stated that he does not intend to grant clemency in this case. Amnesty International fears that Sékou Bangoura may be executed in the near future.

Sékou Bangoura is alleged to have thrown a grenade into a bar in the Gbessia suburb of Conakry after a dispute over money on the night of 10 May 1995: three people were killed in the incident and several others were injured. He was convicted of murder under Article 251 of the Penal Code. His lawyer has already lodged an appeal against the conviction and sentence; it is not known when the appeal will be heard.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty without reservation. It considers the death penalty to be incompatible with the right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment as proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nowhere has it been shown that the death penalty has any special power to reduce crime or political violence.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International fears that, while no judicial death sentences are known to have been passed since the mid 1980s, more may be passed in the near future. The government announced in late 1994 that it would be taking a strong stance against rising crime, including armed robbery and, in December 1994, government spokesperson Ibrahima Sylla told reporters that the death penalty would from now on be enforced against armed robbers and those found guilty of murder.

Under the Penal Code a wide range of offences carry a mandatory death penalty. These include premeditated murder, poisoning, the murder of either parent, murder committed in the course of another offence, the destruction of buildings by arson or explosives and large-scale embezzlement of public funds. Other capital offences relate to the security of the state. The law provides for the right to appeal for those sentenced to death and stipulates that executions cannot be carried out until the head of state has considered and rejected appeals for clemency. Execution is by firing squad.

Sékou Bangoura's trial and sentencing have taken place against a backdrop of another highly-publicised armed robbery trial: the 40 defendants are accused of murder, criminal association and armed robbery. A day after their arrest, 16 other defendants were killed in mysterious circumstances in prison on 31 December 1994, according to the state prosecutor, Monsieur André Safela Lenaud, during a prison brawl. There are widespread fears that some or all of them were secretly killed in custody.

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

- expressing concern at the passing of the death sentence on Sékou Bangoura on 6 June 1995 and urging that the sentence be commuted if it comes before the President for clemency;
- stating that Amnesty International, while not condoning the crime for which Sékou Bangoura was convicted, is unconditionally opposed to the death penalty in all cases on the grounds that it is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment which violates the right to life and which has not been shown to have any special deterrent effect;
- urging the government to commute death penalties in all cases.

APPEALS TO:

President Lansana CONTE

Président de la République
Conakry

Republic of Guinea

Faxes: + 224-41-1621/1623/1673

Telexes: 623

Telegrams: Président Lansana Conte, Conakry, Guinea

Salutation: Monsieur le Président / Dear President

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Salifou SYLLA

Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

Conakry

Republic of Guinea

Telegrams: Ministre de la Justice, Conakry, Guinea

Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

Minister of the Interior and Security

Monsieur Alseny René GOMEZ

Ministre de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité

Ministère de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité

Conakry

Republic of Guinea

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Procurator

Procureur de la République

c/o Palais de Justice

Conakry

Republic of Guinea

L'Indépendent, BP 242, Conakry, Republic of Guinea

Le Lynx, BP 4968, Conakry, Republic of Guinea

HOROYA, BP 341/191, Conakry, Republic of Guinea

and to diplomatic representatives of Guinea accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 August 1995.