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SENEGAL: WIDESPREAD USE OF TORTURE CONTINUES TO BE TOLERATED BY THE AUTHORITIES

UNITED NATIONS - GENEVA: Today, the United Nations (UN) Committee against Torture (CAT) was due to examine a report recently submitted by the Senegalese authorities on Senegal's implementation of and compliance with the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

At a very short notice, however, the Senegalese Government has informed the Committee that its delegation was unable to attend due to the unavailability of its main expert.

Amnesty international deeply regrets the fact that the Senegalese government has missed such an important opportunity to appear before the CAT. Amnesty International continues to receive numerous allegations of torture and ill-treatment particularly in the context of "the armed conflict in the Casamance region between government forces and armed separatists". The organization, therefore, regards the presence of the Senegalese delegation at the 16th session of the CAT in April 1996 as particularly important.

In a report issued this month, Amnesty International has provided information regarding its concerns on the widespread use of torture in Senegal (AI Index: AFR 49/01/95).

Torture and ill-treatment have escalated in Senegal in the last few years. Such brutality appears essentially aimed at extracting confessions from prisoners and is used without distinction against those accused of common law or political offences.

In its report Amnesty International highlighted the reluctance of the Senegalese authorities to investigate promptly and impartially all allegations of torture and ill-treatment and to bring to justice those responsible.

The organization is concerned that this reluctance fuels the cycle of impunity and indicates that torture and ill-treatment are tolerated by the Senegalese authorities.

BACKGROUND

The UN Committee against Torture is a body of ten experts established in accordance with Article 17 of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment to monitor the implementation of the Convention. The CAT meets twice a year and reviews a number of the periodic reports submitted by state parties to the Convention on measures

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they have taken to implement its provisions. The CAT is currently holding its fifteenth session in Geneva (i.e. 13-24 November 1995).

At each session of the CAT, Amnesty International makes available information in relation to torture and ill-treatment on countries whose reports are being examined by the CAT.

In addition to Senegal, Armenia, Colombia, Denmark, Guatemala and the United Kingdom have recently submitted their periodic reports which the CAT is examining during the course of this session.

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