

PUBLIC

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To: Medical professionals  
From: Medical Office / West Africa Subregional Team  
Date: 3 June 1999

### **MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION**

#### **Lack of adequate medical care in prison SENEGAL**

Theme: prison conditions / access to medical care

#### **Summary**

Amnesty International is concerned at reports that several prisoners detained in the *Prisons Civiles*, Civil Prisons, in Ziguinchor and Kolda in Casamance, Senegal, as well as in the *Prison Civile* in Dakar, Senegal, are not being provided with adequate medical care. Up to ten prisoners have reportedly died in custody or shortly after release since April 1995 when a wave of arrests of suspected members of an armed opposition group began.

Amnesty International is calling on the Senegalese authorities to ensure that, in accordance with internationally recognized human rights principles (the UN Body of Principles and the UN Standard Minimum Rules), detainees held in the *Prisons Civiles* in Ziguinchor, Kolda and Dakar, are given access to the medical treatment they require (see below for extracts from these principles).

#### **Background**

On 12 February 1999, the President of Senegal, Abdou Diouf, ordered the release of 123 prisoners suspected of being members of Democratic Forces of Casamance Movement (*Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance - MFDC*) who had been detained in the *Prisons Civiles* in Dakar, Kolda and Ziguinchor. The MFDC is an armed opposition group which is claiming the independence of Casamance, a region in southern Senegal. Some 110 other detainees continue to be held without charge or trial in these prisons. Prison conditions in Senegal are extremely harsh and put the prisoners' health and, in some cases, lives at serious risk. The food provided is generally inadequate and prisoners have to rely on their relatives to bring food into the prison. Sick detainees are taken to hospital only once they are seriously ill.

Since the beginning of the wave of arrests of suspected members of the MFDC in April 1995, at least ten detainees have died reportedly because of lack of adequate medical treatment, including Idrissa Diedhou who was held at the *Prison Civile* at Ziguinchor from 1995 until April 1998, who died on 10 November 1998. He had reportedly been tortured in detention by having a hot iron put on his head, under his feet and on his back.

Other reports of torture in detention and lack of medical care received by Amnesty International include the cases of:

**Simon Diatta** (aged 31): in detention without charge or trial since 1995. Beaten by the gendarmerie at the time of arrest, made to crawl on the floor; gendarmes then stamped on his arms and feet. Reportedly suffering from abdominal pains, pain in his bones, joints and chest, and having difficulty breathing.

**Oulou Diatta** (aged 50): arrested on 17 August 1995 and subsequently tortured by the gendarmerie who forced him to drink two bottles of fuel causing prolonged stomach upset; continues to be detained without charge or trial.

**UN Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons  
Under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment**

***Principle 24***

A proper medical examination shall be offered to a detained or imprisoned person as promptly as possible after his admission to the place of detention or imprisonment, and thereafter medical care and treatment shall be provided whenever necessary. This care and treatment shall be provided free of charge.

**UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners**

***Rule 22***

(1) At every institution there shall be available the services of at least one qualified medical officer who should have some knowledge of psychiatry. The medical services should be organized in close relationship to the general health administration of the community or nation. They shall include a psychiatric service for the diagnosis and, in proper cases, the treatment of states of mental abnormality.

(2) Sick prisoners who require specialist treatment shall be transferred to specialized institutions or to civil hospitals. Where hospital facilities are provided in an institution, their equipment, furnishings and pharmaceutical supplies shall be proper for the medical care and treatment of sick prisoners, and there shall be a staff of suitable trained officers.

***Rule 25***

(1) The medical officer shall have the care of the physical and mental health of the prisoners and should daily see all sick prisoners, all who complain of illness, and any prisoner to whom his attention is specially directed.

(2) The medical officer shall report to the director whenever he considers that a prisoner's physical or mental health has been or will be injuriously affected by continued imprisonment or by any condition of imprisonment.

## Recommended Actions

Appeals are requested from health professionals, preferably written in French, to the Senegalese authorities whose addresses are given below:

- o introducing yourself as a member of Amnesty International's health professional network;
- o seeking information on the current state of health of Simon Diatta and Oulou Diatta who are currently being held in the *Prison Civile* in Ziguinchor;
- o expressing serious concern about reports that these two men and other sick prisoners detained at the *Prisons Civiles* in Ziguinchor, Kolda and Dakar are not provided with adequate medical care;
- o urging the Senegalese government to make every effort to ensure that prison conditions in Senegal comply with at least basic standards as set out in the UN Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons Under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners;
- o calling on the Senegalese authorities to release all detainees who are held without charge or trial, or to charge them with a recognizable criminally offence
- o calling for independent investigations into reports of abuse and ill-treatment in the *Prisons Civiles* in Ziguinchor, Kolda and Dakar, and urging the authorities to make the results of such investigations public and to bring anybody found guilty of abuse to justice.

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. Please send copies of any replies you do receive to the International Secretariat [attn: medical team] and check with your national coordinator or the medical team if you send appeals after the 30<sup>th</sup> August 1999.

## ADDRESSES

Monsieur Abdou DIOUF  
Président de la République  
(*President of the Republic*)  
La Présidence  
Avenue Roume  
BP 168  
DAKAR, Sénégal  
Fax: + 221 8 21 8660

Fax: + 221 8 23 2727

Monsieur Jacques BAUDIN  
Ministre de la Justice  
(*Minister of Justice*)  
Building Administratif  
Avenue Roume  
BP 168  
DAKAR, Sénégal

Monsieur Cheikh Amidou KANE  
Ministre des Forces armées  
*(Minister for the Armed Forces)*  
Building Administratif  
Avenue Roume  
BP 168  
DAKAR, Sénégal  
Fax: + 221 8 21 0542

**Please send copies of your letters to  
diplomatic representatives of Senegal in  
your country or to the nearest Senegalese  
embassy.**