

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: AFR 24/006/2005 (Public)
News Service No: 089
14 April 2005

Embargo Date: 14 April 2005 00:01 GMT

Equatorial Guinea: Prisoners starving to death

At least 70 prisoners held in Equatorial Guinea's Black Beach prison in Malabo are at imminent risk of starving to death, according to Amnesty International.

Those most at risk include 11 foreign nationals sentenced in an unfair trial in November 2004 and dozens of Equatorial Guinean political detainees arrested throughout 2004 and held without charge or trial.

According to information received by Amnesty International, in the last six weeks conditions have drastically deteriorated with the authorities halting the provision of prison food and blocking all contact with families, lawyers and consular officials.

Many of those detained at Black Beach prison are already extremely weak because of the torture or ill-treatment they have suffered and because of chronic illnesses for which they have not received adequate medical treatment.

"Such near starvation, lack of medical attention and appalling prison conditions represent a scandalous failure by the Equatorial Guinea authorities to fulfil their most basic responsibilities under international law. Unless immediate action is taken, many of those detained at Black Beach prison will die," said the Director of Amnesty International's Africa Program Kolawole Olaniyan.

The provision of food by the authorities was reportedly reduced from a cup of rice daily in December 2004, to one or two bread rolls and since the end of February 2005, provision of any prison food at all has been sporadic.

Prisoners and detainees are now dependent on food handed to prison guards by families. This means that the 11 foreign nationals and dozens of Equatorial Guinean political detainees arrested on the mainland are particularly at risk of starvation because they do not have families in Malabo to support them.

All those incarcerated are kept inside their cells 24-hours-a-day and the foreign nationals are also kept with their hands and legs cuffed at all times.

In addition to the six Armenians and five South Africans convicted last November, Amnesty

International has also learnt that four Nigerian nationals have been held in Black Beach prison for several months without charge or trial and without their embassy being notified.

Two former Black Beach prisoners are now being held at Malabo's central police station. Convicted of attempting to overthrow the government in June 2002 after an unfair trial, Amnesty International considers them to be prisoners of conscience and is seriously concerned that they may now be tortured.

Amnesty International is calling on the Equatorial Guinea authorities to immediately provide regular and adequate food, medical care to all who need it, remove any hand and leg cuffs, end all incommunicado detention, and grant international humanitarian organisations such as the International Red Cross Committee immediate access to all those detained.

Public Document

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