

29/05/91

Distr:SC/PO

0001 hrs gmt Thursday 12 December 1991

FGUINEA: @HUMAN RIGHTS SAFEGUARDS STILL LACKING

Basic human rights are still unprotected in Guinea, seven years after a new government promised an end to the violations of the previous rulers, Amnesty International said today.

Publishing a new report, Amnesty International said: "Political opponents have continued to be persecuted and imprisoned, and reports of torture have continued to reach the organization. Until adequate legal safeguards are introduced, these violations will continue in Guinea."

The report details human rights violations since 1984, when a military government took over after the death of President Sékou Touré. The incoming government promised an end to the violations perpetrated during Sékou Touré's 26 years in power. "But a year later the past patterns began to be repeated, with prisoners being tortured and 'disappearing'" said AI. "The questions we raised then with the government have still not been answered, and each year new cases of human rights violations come to light."

Each year has seen new cases of torture, with the government taking no action to stop prisoners being detained incommunicado at the mercy of the security police for long periods. Last year, refugees from the violence in Liberia were among the victims of torture in Guinea. In 1989, a 17-year-old boy died in police custody, apparently as a result of torture. A violent demonstration in protest at his death resulted in another six people dying when police opened fire. There have also been other killings which have gone uncriticized by the government -- at least five people were killed and dozens injured when security forces opened fire on student demonstrators last year.

The government has not yet accounted for 63 people who "disappeared" after a coup attempt in 1985. Some 340 people faced grossly unfair trials, of whom 201 were convicted. The government says everyone has been released, but the fate of 63 people is still unknown.

"No-one knows what happened to them," said Amnesty International. "They seem to have vanished into silence."

Other political opponents have also been subjected to human rights violations. Guinea was a one-party state from 1958 until 1984 and since then no political parties have been allowed: today political opponents of the current government still face arrest, prosecution or detention without charge and even torture.

The main party which has tried to establish itself openly is the Rassemblement du peuple guinéen (RPG), the Guinean People's Rally. Amnesty International has been charting arrests of alleged RPG members since 1988.

Recently, several people were arrested in May and June 1991, when the RPG's Secretary General, Alpha Condé, returned to Guinea. Five RPG members were arrested two days after his return when they organized a public meeting where Alpha Condé was due to speak. A journalist and photographer were also arrested.

Some 60 people, including Alpha Condé's brother, were arrested a month later. Ten were eventually brought to trial, but only one was convicted. Another RPG member was detained for a few days in October 1991 and Alpha Condé himself eventually fled the country.

In October, seven workers from Kamsar were sentenced to terms of imprisonment after they tried to organise a strike. They had already been held for two months awaiting trial and are now at liberty awaiting the outcome of an appeal.

Amnesty International is urging the government to introduce basic safeguards for human rights, including the right for all detainees to be brought before a judicial authority soon after their arrest, which is already guaranteed by law but does not happen in practice. Together with strict limits on incommunicado detention, this would be a vital step towards ending torture. The organization is also pressing for inquiries into deaths and "disappearances" at the hands of the security forces.

EMBARGOED FOR 0001 HRS GMT THURSDAY 12 DECEMBER 1991