

EXTERNAL

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To: Health professionals
From: Medical Office / West Africa sub-regional team
Date: 8 July 1997

MEDICAL LETTER WRITING ACTION

Seven sick prisoners SENEGAL

Keywords

Theme: ill health / denial of medical care

Profession/association: nurse

Summary

Amnesty International is concerned about the state of health of seven prisoners among 128 detainees from the Casamance region of southern Senegal accused of being armed opposition members or supporters. The seven suffer a variety of health problems. AI believes that many of these prisoners are probably prisoners of conscience. It is calling for the immediate release of all those against whom there is no evidence that they were personally involved in any violence or other recognizably criminal offences. It believes that all others should have the right to a fair trial. Furthermore, the organization urges the authorities to ensure that those held are medically examined and given whatever medical treatment they require.

Recommended action

Letters are requested from medical professionals to the addresses given below

- o stating that you are concerned for the health and well being of Lansana Sané, Ibrahima Diedhiou, Alpha Badji and Idrissa Sané (held in the central prison of Rebeuss in Dakar) and Abdoulaye Kiné Senghor, Abdoulaye Coly, and Simon Diatta (held in the central prison in Ziguinchor)
- o expressing concern that the above-named prisoners appear to be suffering ill-health and may be receiving inadequate medical care
- o seeking assurances that the men will receive a proper examination to determine their diagnosis and will be given whatever treatment they require
- o urging that the prisoners be released unless they are to be charged with a recognizably criminal act and given a fair trial

Addresses

Minister of Justice
Monsieur Jacques BAUDIN
Garde des sceaux et Ministre de la Justice
Ministère de la Justice
DAKAR, Sénégal

Minister of Health

Monsieur Ousame NGOM
Ministre de la Santé
Ministère de la Santé
DAKAR, Sénégal

Judge in charge of investigations

Monsieur Demba KANDJI
Doyen des juges d'instruction
Tribunal régional hors classe de Dakar
Rue Kléber
DAKAR, Sénégal

Attorney General

Monsieur Pape Bougouma DIÈNE
Procureur général près de la Cour d'Appel
de Dakar
Parquet général
Cour d'Appel
Bloc des Madeleines
DAKAR, Sénégal

Attorney General for Ziguinchor

Cheick Tydiane BA
Procureur de la République de Ziguinchor
Tribunal régional de Ziguinchor
ZIGUINCHOR, Sénégal

Dakar prison Director

Monsieur Lamine THIOR
Régisseur de la prison centrale de Dakar
Prison de Rebeuss
DAKAR, Sénégal

Ziguinchor prison Director

Monsieur Youssoufa NDIAYE
Régisseur de la prison de Ziguinchor
Prison de Ziguinchor
ZIGUINCHOR, Sénégal

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**Seven sick prisoners
SENEGAL**

Amnesty International is concerned about the health of seven prisoners who are among 128 men (all from the Casamance region in southern Senegal) accused of being armed opposition members or supporters. They have been detained for more than two years and are held apart from common-law prisoners in two prisons in Dakar, the capital, and in Ziguinchor, Casamance.

To Amnesty International's knowledge, none of these prisoners has been referred to a doctor for further investigation of the symptoms they describe. It would appear that in Dakar, where the prison is seriously overcrowded, only critically ill prisoners are transferred to hospital. During 1996, four Casamance political detainees died in detention in Dakar—one in his cell and the other three after being admitted to hospital. No information is available on the cause of their death or any treatment they may have received prior to their transfer.

Most Casamance prisoners arrested between April 1995 and February 1996 were reportedly tortured. Most of them—including some reportedly bearing visible signs of their torture—reported this to the *juge d'instruction*, the examining magistrate who remanded them in custody shortly after the period of *garde à vue* [i.e. the initial period of detention, usually incommunicado, before suspects are brought in front of a judicial authority to be remanded in custody]. Under both Senegalese law and Senegal's international obligations under *the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* (which Senegal ratified in 1986), there should be a prompt and impartial investigation wherever there is reasonable ground to believe that an act of torture has been committed. However, the examining magistrate did not order any investigation and no action was taken by the judicial authorities.

Those held in the *prison centrale de Rebeuss* in Dakar:

Lansana SANÉ (nurse - arrested on 27 April 1995). Complains of eyesight problems, a clouding of vision (*des problèmes de vision, un voile dans les yeux*)

Ibrahima DIEDHIOU (worked in a garage - arrested on 27 April 1995). Since he was first taken ill in August 1996, he has spent 15 months in the special ward for prisoners of the *hôpital le Dantec*, where he was transferred twice. He was last returned to prison in December 1996. He says he suffers from headaches, watering eyes and his vision is blurred (*se plaint de douleurs à la tête et de maux aux yeux (larme, vision floue)*).

Alpha BADJI (farmer - arrested on 30 April 1995). He suffers from problems with his spine (*des problèmes à la colonne vertébrale*)

Idrissa SANÉ (farmer - arrested on 1 May 1995) - complains that his body aches all over (*Il a mal partout*)

Those held in the *prison centrale* in Ziguinchor

In general, the basic medical care available to the 44 Casamance prisoners held in Ziguinchor prison has been superior to that in Dakar, because of their smaller number and immediate access to their family. Upon their arrival at the prison, tortured prisoners who had suffered serious injuries, caused by burning and severe beatings were treated at the infirmary. Information on their torture and in particular the injuries they sustained was confirmed by entries in the medical registry at the prison (some of these are mentioned below). One of them who had also suffered a serious eye infection caused, he says, by being forced to stay in a room full of excrement, was taken to a doctor outside the prison for treatment.

Abdoulaye Kiné SENGHOR (aged 35 - arrested in his garden on 26 June 1995) appears to suffer from depression which may have been brought on by the torture inflicted on him during the first days following his arrest. At the time of his arrest, his ear was cut with a machete causing bleeding for several days. In the following days he was repeatedly beaten, on one occasion with a piece of wood with a projecting nail. The nail entered his left foot which became infected. He was denied any medical treatment until his transfer to the *prison centrale* in Ziguinchor in early July 1995. The medical registry at the prison states: deep wound with infection and trauma to the left foot (ankle) [*blessure profonde avec infection et traumatisme, pied gauche (cheville)*]. He appears to be suffering psychological symptoms such as loss of memory, desire for isolation, and rejection of food caused by his wish not to sit with other prisoners. When he turns against those who approach him it provokes laughter from other prisoners. He frequently refuses food because he does not want to sit with other prisoners.

Abdoulaye COLY (aged 32 - arrested on 26 June 1995). He feels dizzy (*il a le vertige*) and falls frequently. He also appears to be suffering from psychological disorders: memory loss, speaking nonsensically, refusing to eat and to obey orders. Like Abdoulaye Senghor, he was also beaten with a piece of wood with a projecting nail which caused an injury to his back. The prison medical registry says: "*blessures aux lombaires*" [injury to the lumbar vertebrae].

Simon DIATTA (aged 29, arrested on 26 June 1995). At the time of his arrest, he showed the members of the security forces a medical record and stated that he was in Ziguinchor to receive medical treatment as an outpatient at the hospital. He suffers from palpitations and pain in the ribs and feet and since his arrest he sometimes feels dizzy (*souffre de vertiges occasionnels*). Although during the *garde à vue* he repeatedly stated his medical condition, this was not taken into account. He also reported to have been subjected to constant beatings (including with a piece of wood with a nail) and to other cruel and inhuman treatment. The medical registry states: "*blessures, coups et diverges contusions*" [wounds, blows and various contusions]. Since he has been in prison, his family has been able to send him some medicine.

Background information

In April 1995 and in the following months, the Senegalese security forces carried out a succession of mass arrests throughout Casamance, detaining hundreds of civilians suspected of supporting the *Mouvement des forces démocratiques de la Casamance* [MFDC: the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance]. The MFDC is seeking independence for the region of Casamance and its military wing has been engaged in armed opposition since the early 1980s. Most of those arrested appear to have been unarmed villagers rounded up mostly either on the basis of denunciations, because they were relatives or had similar names to alleged MFDC supporters. Over two years after their arrest, the Senegalese authorities are claiming that the judicial investigations are nearly completed and that they will be brought to trial soon. However, from information gathered by Amnesty International from the prisoners and on the conduct of the judicial investigations, there appears to be little or no evidence that any of them were personally involved in recognizably criminal activities or acts of violence. Amnesty International therefore believes that most of them are probably prisoners of conscience and fears that, as in previous periods of active MFDC armed opposition, they will be held indefinitely without trial until a new peace agreement can be signed.