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GUINEA: DOES THE POLITICAL WILL EXIST TO IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS ?

Arbitrary arrests, torture, deaths in detention and death sentences remain commonplace in Guinea, says Amnesty International in a report published today.

During a visit this year, the organization found continuing human rights violations in a country that has ratified nearly all international human rights instruments, including the United Nations Convention against Torture.

Over the last five years, activists from the main opposition parties, the *Rassemblement du peuple de Guinée* (RPG), the Guinean People\*s Rally, and the *Parti du renouveau et du progrès* (PRP), the Party of Renewal and Progress, have often been arbitrarily detained and beaten by the security forces. Their leaders have been prevented from holding public meetings in some places in Haute Guinée. Trade union officials have also been ill-treated by gendarmes.

Although in theory the press has had the right of free expression since 1991, journalists continue to be harassed. In June 1995 Doudou Traoré, a cameraman who was accompanying an RPG march to Kankan, was detained for several days. On his release, he is reported to have stated that a member of the security forces threatened him in the following terms: "He is a BBC cameraman. He is taking pictures to be shown abroad and discredit our country. He should be beaten up and finished off as soon as it's dark."

For demanding better education facilities, Guinean students have been detained and beaten. For demonstrating peacefully, Siradiou Diallo, a second-year chemistry student, was clubbed and struck several times with a rifle butt, with the result that he lost some of his teeth.

Serge Daniel, an RFI correspondent, alleged that during his detention he was given 50 lashes. He also said that hot water was thrown on his face. Mamadi Sanoh, who was detained in March 1995, alleged that he was mercilessly beaten. On his release, he told the press that he had lost the use of his right eye. Also, 16 detainees died at the beginning of the year at Conakry Prison, apparently as a result of torture and inhuman treatment. An inquiry was opened, but its findings have never been published.

In a report published in March 1995, the *Association guinéenne des droits de l'homme* (AGDH), Guinean Human Rights Association, described prisoners' conditions as follows: "Lying on the bare ground, covered in urine and faeces, detainees sleep on the floor without mats or covers."

Amnesty International has called on the Guinean authorities to put an immediate stop to the use of torture and provide all prisoners with a proper diet, medical care, and decent hygiene and sanitary conditions.

The organization is also concerned by cases of people handed over to angry crowds by the prison authorities. In June 1993 Mamady Bayo, who was accused of murder, was handed over to a crowd by the police. He was burned alive.

On several occasions, security forces have opened fire on civilians, including women and children. During a peaceful demonstration in 1993, at least 70 people were killed. The chief of police announced the arrest and immediate trial of two soldiers suspected of firing on the crowd. However, the outcome of the investigation and trial has never been published.

There have been no executions in Guinea since 1985. However, six people have been sentenced to death this year. Amnesty International has always opposed this punishment as a denial of the right to life. Several human rights associations and Guinean opposition figures have declared themselves against the death penalty, arguing that it cannot solve the crime problem.

The organization calls upon the authorities to conduct full investigations into human rights violations, and to take all the measures needed to put an end to them.

Amnesty International asks that impunity be ended in Guinea and that those responsible for all such violations be brought to justice.

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