

Public

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To: Health Professional Network
From: Health and Human Rights Team
Date: 19 March 2007

Health Professional Action
Equatorial Guinea
Guillermo Nguema Ela
Donato Ondó Ondó
and other detainees in Black Beach prison

Summary:

At least 35 prisoners of conscience and political prisoners at Black Beach prison in Malabo, the capital of Equatorial Guinea, are being denied medical treatment. The precise number of prisoners held at the prison or the state of health of all of them is unknown, but it is reported that many suffer from chronic conditions for which they receive no medical care. Two of the prisoners, Guillermo Nguema Ela and Donato Ondó Ondó, adopted by AI as prisoners of conscience, are known to be seriously unwell as a result of chronic ailments, poor prison conditions and the refusal of the prison authorities to provide them with medical care. Amnesty International is gravely concerned about their health, and fears that their lives, and those of other prisoners, may be at risk.

Background:

All of those detained at Black Beach prison are currently denied access to medical treatment, after an apparent change in policy in late 2006.

Conditions in Black Beach prison had improved slightly at the end of 2005 as a result of the opening of a new wing and regular visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Throughout most of 2006, a doctor or nurse visited the prison monthly and provided medical care to the prisoners and advised the prison on the need to send sick prisoners for treatment to the hospital or a doctor outside.

However, since November 2006 prisoners have not been allowed visits of longer than 5-15 minutes daily, and since at least early January 2007 the prison authorities have not provided medical treatment to prisoners. Medical personnel have not been allowed to visit the prison nor have the prisoners been taken for treatment to hospital or to see a doctor outside the prison. In addition, the prison authorities do not provide medicines to those who need them. Many of the prisoners suffer from a variety of chronic ailments for which they do not normally get medical treatment. Denying sick prisoners access to a qualified medical officer contravenes the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

Guillermo Nguema Elá suffers from diabetes and hypertension (high blood pressure) and has been prescribed daily medication. Until the restrictions on medical treatment were imposed, he was taken for medical check ups outside prison once a week. In late February he reportedly became very ill. His sugar level and his blood pressure apparently reached very high levels, and he became feverish and dehydrated. He is reported to have lost a lot of weight. His health began to improve about the beginning of March 2007 after his wife took him some medicines.

Donato Ondó Ondó is reported to have been very ill on several occasions. It is reported that for the past two years he has been suffering from alopecia (loss of hair) and skin problems. Donato Ondó is not known to have been examined by a doctor, nor is he receiving any medical treatment.

Guillermo Nguema Elá and Donato Ondó Ondó were part of a group of over 140 people, all members of the political party Democratic Republican Force (*Fuerza Demócrata Republicana* – FDR), who were arrested in March 2002 and charged with attempting to overthrow the government. They were sentenced in May and June 2002 to 20 years' imprisonment after a trial that failed to uphold international standards. Sixty six of their co-defendants were also convicted as charged but most of these have been released under the terms of several presidential pardons. Guillermo Nguema Elá and Donato Ondó Ondó and 11 others, however, remain in Black Beach prison in Malabo. Most, if not all, were severely tortured at the time of their arrest. At least three of them died in detention as a result of ill-health caused in part from injuries sustained under torture, for which they did not receive medical treatment.

Recommended actions:

Please write letters in Spanish, French or your language to the authorities listed below:

- Explain that you are a health professional and are writing about the cases of Guillermo Nguema Elá and Donato Ondó Ondó and other detainees at Black Beach prison;
- Express concern for the health of about 35 prisoners held in Black Beach prison in Malabo, who have been denied access to medical care since at least January 2007;
- Express concern, in particular, at the deteriorating health of Guillermo Nguema Elá and Donato Ondó Ondó;
- Urge the authorities to provide all prisoners with prompt and appropriate medical treatment, according to their needs, as provided for by international human rights standards including the UN Standards Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners;
- Call on the authorities to improve the conditions in which the prisoners are held, in accordance with the UN Standards Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, ensuring that they receive food of adequate nutritional value, clothing and the opportunity to exercise, all of which are fundamental to the maintenance of an individual's health and strength.

Addresses:

Minister of Justice and Religion

Sr Don Mauricio Bokung Asumu
Ministro de Justicia y Culto
Ministerio de Justicia y Culto
Malabo
República de Guinea Ecuatorial
Fax: +240 09 21 26

Vice Prime Minister (in charge of human rights)

Sr Don Aniceto Ebiaka Muete
Vice-Primer Ministro
Responsable por Asuntos Sociales y Derechos Humanos
Gabinete del Vice Primer Ministro
Palacio del Pueblo
Malabo
República de Guinea Ecuatorial

Minister of Health

Sr Don Antonio Martín Ndong Nchuchuma
Ministro de Sanidad y Bienestar Social
Ministerio de Sanidad y Bienestar Social
Malabo
República de Guinea Ecuatorial

Copies to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

Sr Don Pastor Michá Ondó Bile
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Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores
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President of Parliament and the Parliamentary human Rights Comisión

Sr Don Salomón Nguema Owono
Presidente de la Cámara de Representantes del Pueblo
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