

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

@A missed opportunity to restore respect for human rights

After years of repression, 1993 brought a ray of hope that the Equatorial Guinean government was beginning to realize that civil and political rights could not be denied indefinitely. An electoral law was passed and in March the government and 11 opposition parties signed a pact to guarantee the peaceful exercise of civil rights and freedoms.

As the year progressed, however, the authorities resorted to increasingly repressive tactics. It became apparent that promises of reform were motivated by the wish to appease criticism from abroad and ensure the continuation of economic aid rather than by any desire to protect Equatorial Guineans against human rights abuses. Reports of arrests increased gradually until August, when the human rights situation deteriorated dramatically - mass arrests, torture, deaths in detention, extrajudicial executions, unfair trials and the death penalty were used to intimidate political opponents in the run-up to the parliamentary elections in November 1993. After the elections, which most of the opposition boycotted, the authorities continued to arrest suspected political opponents.

The aim of this report is to provide an insight into the escalation of human rights violations in Equatorial Guinea during the election year. It is hoped that as the seriousness of human rights violations in Equatorial Guinea becomes more widely known, members of the international community - governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals - will act to impress upon the Equatorial Guinean government its obligation to respect human rights.

1. Preparations for a transition to a multi-party system

Following the example of its neighbours, Equatorial Guinea adopted a multi-party political system in 1992. Until then the only party allowed to operate was the ruling *Partido Democrático de Guinea Equatorial* (PDGE), Equatorial Guinea Democratic Party, led by President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. The Constitution was amended in late 1991, and in January 1992 the changes were given effect in new laws concerning the formation and operation of political parties, and governing rights to freedom of expression and assembly. These laws, however, were severely flawed, and by the end of 1992 only six parties had been provisionally legalised. Repression of pro-democracy activists continued throughout 1992, and hundreds of government

opponents were arbitrarily arrested for peaceful political activities. Most of those arrested in 1992 were severely tortured and then released uncharged after a few days or weeks in prison¹.

This pattern of arbitrary arrests and torture of government opponents continued into 1993, although earlier in the year the government appeared to be making an effort to improve its image by allowing the exercise of civil and political rights. In January the government legalized all political parties not yet registered and indicated that elections would take place in the first half of 1993. It also passed an Electoral Law to regulate all activities connected with the electoral process and President Obiang Nguema publicly ordered the security forces not to arrest or harass opposition party activists.

However, the Electoral Law, like the laws passed the previous year, was seriously flawed. It was heavily weighted against opposition parties: for example it stipulated that all opposition electoral speeches and party propaganda had to be approved by the Minister of Territorial Administration. Opposition parties were also required to seek government permission before holding any rally or meeting, however small (a process that often took months). Only those who had lived in the country for the previous five years could stand for election or vote: this excluded many Equatorial Guineans - notably those who had been political exiles - from the political process.

Opposition parties demanded a thorough revision of the electoral law and laws passed in 1992 and, following a month of negotiations, representatives of the government and of 11 political parties grouped in the *Plataforma de Oposición Conjunta*, (POC) Joint Opposition Platform, signed a *Pacto Nacional*, National Pact, on 18 March 1993. Under the terms of the National Pact, the government agreed to a series of reforms to allow free exercise of civil and political rights. It also undertook to punish public officials responsible for abuses and to release political prisoners. Several members of the *Partido del Progreso de Guinea Ecuatorial* (PPGE), Equatorial Guinea Progress Party, who had been arrested in September 1992 were released². However, the authorities refused to reform the electoral law, a step which was also urged by a team of United Nations (UN) experts who examined the law in April 1993. A Monitoring and Follow-up Commission was set up to monitor voter registration and to ensure implementation of the National Pact, but its powers were limited.

The National Pact had been agreed at a time when the human rights situation in Equatorial Guinea was being debated by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in

¹ A detailed account of the political repression that took place in 1992 can be found in *Equatorial Guinea: Political reforms without human rights* (AFR 24/01/93) and the update *Equatorial Guinea: Arrests in December 1992 and January 1993* (AFR 24/04/93)

² See *Equatorial Guinea: Political reforms without human rights* (AI Index: AFR 12/01/93) for more details.

Geneva under item 12³ of the agenda. In view of the government's consistent disregard for human rights the Commission, meeting from February-March 1993 decided to appoint Uruguayan jurist Dr Alejandro Artucio as Special Rapporteur to investigate human rights violations in Equatorial Guinea. Dr. Alejandro Artucio visited Equatorial Guinea in October and again in early December 1993. He is to present a report on his visits to the next session of the Commission between 31 January and 11 March 1994. On his return from his first visit he publicly commented that "in Equatorial Guinea there are no political rights, freedom of the press does not exist and the conditions of prisoners of conscience is catastrophic".

In mid-July 1993, the government announced that legislative elections would be held on 12 September 1993. Opposition parties responded by announcing a boycott of the elections on the grounds that the government had refused to comply with the terms of the National Pact thus ensuring that the elections would be neither free nor fair. The government postponed elections to November 1993 but no reforms were carried out.

Throughout the first half of the year there had been arbitrary arrests of political activists and other human rights violations. However, the severity of the repression became more acute in August following the withdrawal, as a result of international pressure, of the Moroccan soldiers who had acted as President Obiang Nguema's bodyguard⁴. Their role has been taken over by a new paramilitary unit known as *Antorchas* (Torches). Also in August, a prominent government opponent, Andrés Mba, returned to Equatorial Guinea after 13 years' exile in Spain. These events, combined with the opposition's threat to boycott elections, contributed to the government's feelings of insecurity. As a result, scores of people were arrested and tortured and at least two died as a result. On the island of Annobon dozens of people were arrested and two were extrajudicially executed.

The *Antorchas* were responsible for most of these abuses. The members of this unit, which had been set up in late 1992, were drawn from the ranks of the youth movement of the ruling PDGE. It was trained and equipped by French military personnel attached to the French embassy in the capital, Malabo, on Bioko island. The *Antorchas* are also commonly referred to as "Ninjas", apparently because of the similarity of their black uniforms to those of the Japanese martial arts warriors.

³ Item 12 deals with human rights violations in specific countries.

⁴ The Moroccan troops had been seconded to Equatorial Guinea in 1979 under a bi-lateral agreement with the Kingdom of Morocco. During the 1980s they were actively involved, together with local forces, in human rights violations but in the last two years allegations of their active participation in the torture of political prisoners diminished, although they were reportedly present during the torture of prisoners.

2. Human rights violations - January to August 1993

Between January and August 1993 scores of pro-democracy activists were arbitrarily arrested and ill-treated throughout the country, particularly in rural areas in the mainland province of Río Muni. It appeared that, while there had been some attempt in Malabo and in Bata, the main town in Río Muni, to display some respect for civil and political rights, the government officials and the security forces were allowed to continue their usual abuses in areas less open to international scrutiny.

Those arrested between January and August 1993, mostly members or sympathizers of legalised political parties, were released untried after a few days or weeks. Frequently, however, many had to pay fines to secure their release. Those arrested were routinely subjected to torture or ill-treatment.

Early in January, 18 leading members of several political parties were arrested in Bata while they were meeting to discuss the Electoral Law. One was **Pastor Samuel Oke Esono** of the Reformed Church in Equatorial Guinea, and a member of the National Commission of Human Rights, set up by the government in September 1990, probably in response to international pressure but without any guarantees to enable it to work independently and effectively. A few days later, the leaders of four opposition parties were arrested in Ebebiyín, in the northeast of Río Muni, as they returned from a trip abroad. They were held for several days and severely beaten with truncheons on the soles of their feet. One, **Benjamín Balinga**, the leader of the *Partido Social Demócrata* (PSD), Social Democratic Party, who had been briefly arrested in August 1992⁵, was beaten so severely that he was unable to walk for several weeks.

About 50 people were arrested in early February in Nsok-Nsomo, in the northeast Rio Muni, reportedly for not receiving the Minister of Defence with 'all due honours' when he visited the area. Most of those arrested were members of the *Unión Popular* (UP), Popular Union party, the largest opposition party operating in Río Muni, but several members of the ruling PDGE were also reportedly arrested by mistake. The latter were released immediately but the former were held for several days.

Although most of those arrested on the mainland during the first half of 1993 were members or sympathizers of the UP, members of other parties were also subjected to short-term arrests and ill-treatment. For instance, in February **Arsenio Ncogo** and **Luciano Mba**, both members of the *Partido del Progreso de Guinea Ecuatorial* (PPGE), Equatorial Guinea

⁵ See *Equatorial Guinea: Political reforms without human rights* (AI Index: AFR 24/01/93)

Progress Party, were arrested in Akonangui-Ngama, Niefang district, and fined 100,000 CFA Francs (US\$345) for listening to a recording of their party propaganda.

One of those arrested during the first half of 1993 died in detention as a result of torture. **Dámaso Abaga Nve**, a 49-year-old UP member or sympathizer, was apparently arrested in Ebebiyín, northeast Río Muni, for insulting the ruling PDGE. He died in police custody in the early hours of 31 March 1993. A relative said that the provincial governor and the chief of police had awakened the family at four in the morning, informed them that Dámaso Abaga Nve had been found dead in the street, and asked them to go to the police station to collect his body. A forensic report showed that Dámaso Abaga Nve's body presented haematomas and contusions on the head, fractures in the left arm and hand, and cuts between the fingers in the right hand, all consistent with torture. Subsequently, a man who had shared a police cell with Dámaso Abaga Nve said that he had been tortured. The police officers responsible for his death have not been brought to justice.

Reports of arrests in Malabo increased steadily from May onwards as political tension in the capital increased. Opposition parties were persisting in their demands that the National Pact be implemented before elections were held, and at the same time the main countries providing Equatorial Guinea with aid were refusing to contribute financially to the electoral process until serious reforms had been carried out. Some donors, including United Nations agencies and the European Community (now European Union since October 1993), demanded the redrafting of the Electoral Law, the drawing up of a new electoral census, and access to the national media for all political parties. Nevertheless, in mid-May the *Cámara de Representantes del Pueblo* (Chamber of Peoples' Representatives), the Equatorial Guinean parliament, was dissolved to allow for elections within 60 days.

In late May two employees of the Ministry of Industry were detained. **Eulalia Bekuku** was arrested after she was caught photocopying *La Verdad* (The Truth), the only newspaper in the country, published by the opposition party *Convergencia para la Democracia social* (CPDS), Convergence for Social Democracy. She was subjected to a long interrogation which led to the arrest of **Manuel Biribe** who was accused of having distributed *La Verdad*. Both were held for several weeks and then released uncharged.

Five UP members from the Nsok-Nsomo district in the northeast of Río Muni were arrested in late June. They were brutally tortured and one died as a result. **Jesus Abeso Nguema, Efrén Osa Ovono, Elancio Esayong Andeme and Francisco Andeme Nguema**, all from the village of Andom Onvang, had been involved, with other villagers, in a protest about the siting of a health post on the local football ground. In response to the villagers' protest, the authorities in Malabo ordered that a new site be found for the health post. However, local officials were infuriated when villagers cleared a new site and removed the four poles which had been erected as the framework for the building. **Gaspar Mba Oyono**, president of the UP

committee in a neighbouring village, who had come to visit his UP colleagues in Andom Onvang, was blamed for the dispute. He had been briefly arrested on several previous occasions for political reasons.

Over a dozen officials were involved in the arrest including the local representative of the central government, the chief of police, the PDGE district coordinator and 10 soldiers of different ranks. One of the detainees subsequently related how, on the way to prison in Nsok Nsomo, they were all forced out of the cars in which they were being transported, tied to trees and then savagely beaten all over the body. He said he and his companions lost consciousness several times and had to be carried back to the cars. All five sustained serious injuries, including fractures in the legs and arms. Gaspar Mba Oyono was so ill that he was released into the care of his family who took him to Ebebiyín hospital, where he died in July as a result of the injuries. The other four were held incommunicado in Nsok-Nsomo for two weeks and then taken to hospital in Bata where they remained, without receiving appropriate medical treatment, until September when they were taken to Bata prison. In early October they received a visit from the UN Special Rapporteur, Dr Alejandro Artucio, who later said that they still bore clear marks of torture and had difficulty in walking. They had not been charged with any offence by the time they were released under an amnesty granted by President Obiang Nguema on 12 October to mark the country's 25th anniversary of independence.

In early July **Laurentino Jesús Nsué** and **Federico Nsong Eyenga**, industrial engineers working with the national electricity company, were arrested. While they were on duty on 2 July there had been a power failure in the area of Malabo where the Chamber of Peoples' Representatives is situated, just as President Obiang Nguema was about to make a speech. Power cuts are frequent in Malabo, but the two men were accused of deliberately cutting the power supply to prevent President Obiang Nguema from making his speech. They were detained for over a week and severely beaten. Laurentino Jesús Nsué suffered a broken nose and multiple bruising while Federico Nsono Eyenga, who was reportedly beaten on the head, began to have convulsions and had to be taken to hospital, where he remained for several days.

3. Human rights violations August - December 1993

Repression of political activists, their families and friends increased dramatically all over Equatorial Guinea in August 1993. For approximately six weeks, the intensity and range of violations reached levels not seen in the country for years.

The authorities, apparently in an attempt to secure their hold on power, made allegations on several occasions that they had detected plots to overthrow the government and accused Spain and the United States of America of complicity. They failed to present any evidence that

such plots ever existed. However, between July and September, several Spanish nationals resident in Equatorial Guinea and known to be friends of leaders of opposition parties were detained and expelled from the country. In December the Spanish consul in Bata, who had often been the subject of harassment by the Equatorial Guinean authorities, was expelled for allegedly meeting with Equatorial Guinean opposition leaders "until well into the night".

In early August scores of people - soldiers, former soldiers and a civilians - were detained briefly in Malabo and tortured. Several former soldiers, some of whom had been detained on previous occasions for political reasons, were subsequently confined to their villages in Río Muni. The authorities reportedly justified their actions by saying that former soldiers normally become disgruntled, engaging in criminal acts and becoming a threat to security. Among those arrested at that time were: former **Captain José Abeso Nsué**, who was held for several weeks in 1988 in connection with an alleged attempted coup in August that year; former **Captain Lucas Oyono Nsué**, member of UP, who was detained in 1991; **Angel Federico Eyí Obama**, member of the *Partido de la Convergencia Social Demócrata* (PCSD), Social Democratic Convergence Party, who had been arrested on several occasions in 1991; and former **Lieutenant Tobías Obiang Nguema** who had also been detained on many occasions in the past.

Tobías Obiang Nguema was severely beaten in Bata before being sent to his village: there were reports that he was in danger of dying. He was arrested again early in September in his village and taken back to Malabo, where he was again tortured and forced to sign an statement implicating himself in a plot to overthrow the government. Together with other soldiers, he was tried in early October and acquitted. The other three former soldiers mentioned above fled Equatorial Guinea in early September 1993, when they were about to be re-arrested.

Two weeks after the arrests described above, scores of soldiers were arrested and held in military barracks in Malabo. Some were later tried. Most were brutally tortured. They were accused of belonging to the UP and of raiding an arsenal in preparation for a coup in complicity with former **Lieutenant Pedro Motú Mamiaga**. Among those arrested were Sergeants **Jacinto Nculu, Dámaso Ondó** and **Miguel Ndjeng**, Corporal **Bonifacio Nsogo** and Private **Lorenzo Nsué Ndong**. These five, together with Tobías Obiang Nguema, were tried in secret between 30 September and 1 October in the barracks where they were being held. The military court used summary procedures which curtail the rights of the defence and deny those convicted the right to appeal against their convictions and sentences. Tobías Obiang Nguema was acquitted. The other five were convicted of conspiracy, incitement to rebellion, and slandering and insulting the Head of State. Jacinto Nculu was sentenced to 24 years' imprisonment, while the other four were given prison terms of three years each. Eye-witnesses said all six defendants showed signs of torture. Jacinto Nculu had bruises all over his head and his wrists appeared to have been broken. Apparently he was unstable on his feet, had difficulty in hearing

what was being said and was incoherent in his speech. His sentence was reduced by two thirds and the others had their sentences halved in the 12 October amnesty.

A former prisoner of conscience, ex-Lieutenant Pedro Motú Mamiaga, a UP member, was arrested early in the afternoon of 22 August at the Hotel Ureca. He was visiting the president of the UP, who had just returned to Equatorial Guinea after 13 years' exile in Spain. Dozens of civilians who had gone to the airport to welcome the UP leader were also arrested and briefly detained between 21 and 26 August.

After his arrest, Pedro Motú Mamiaga was reportedly taken to the military barracks recently vacated by the Moroccan soldiers, where he died either on 22 or 23 August as a result of torture. On the evening of 23 August the authorities announced that he had committed suicide after being confronted with "irrefutable proof" that he had been inciting to rebellion and plotting to overthrow the government. However, this "proof" has never been made public and may not exist. No autopsy or investigation into his death was carried out. His body was not given to his family for burial, allowing the authorities to hide the evidence which his dead body might bear of tortures inflicted before his death.

Pedro Motú Mamiaga had become a legend as the sergeant who captured Equatorial Guinea's first President, Francisco Macías Nguema, when the latter tried to flee the country after he was deposed by his nephew, the current president of Equatorial Guinea, in 1979. He was perceived as an enemy of President Obiang Nguema and a potentially powerful figure in Equatorial Guinea's political arena. In 1986 Amnesty International learnt that since 1979 Pedro Motú had spent long periods in prison or under house arrest. There was no further news of him until December 1990, when he was arrested with at least a dozen other soldiers and civilians for calling for political change. He was held incommunicado in Malabo's Black Beach prison until January 1992 when he was released uncharged in a general amnesty. He subsequently went into exile in Cameroon. He had returned to Equatorial Guinea six weeks before he was killed.

The wave of repression extended to the tiny island of Annobon, 670 kilometres from Bioko island, and with a population of 2,000 people, mostly women, children and elderly people. An undetermined number of people had been arrested in June 1993 after a protest about the cancellation of supply flights and in August two people were extrajudicially executed and dozens were arrested and tortured in the wake of what the government termed "a rebellion". These incidents are recent examples of a long history of repression of the Annobonese people who have been subjected to almost total isolation and neglect. Recent harvests have been poor and the authorities have failed to deliver sufficient food. The resulting extreme poverty has given rise to protests which have been violently suppressed. This in turn has given rise to a nationalist sentiment among the Annobonese. Talk of independence - there is no evidence of the existence of any separatist movement - has led to further repression.

In June 1993, the government withdrew permission for the monthly flights provided by the Spanish Cooperation which brought medical and other supplies to Annobon. The islanders depended on these flights not only for supplies but also for news of the outside world - the only other means of communication is by radio and the boat which ferries people and supplies once or twice a year. In mid-June a number of people were arrested after they protested about the cancellation of the flights. They also protested at the beating of **Eusebio Pueyo**, who had been arrested for listening to *Radio Exterior de España* (External Service of Spanish Radio): this was not an offence in law, but evidently discouraged by the authorities.

The incident in August apparently began with an argument in a bar between two government officials - the island's governor and the local military commander - and a group of civilians. The military commander is said to have assaulted a member of the group and a scuffle ensued. The civilians, who were not armed, overpowered and disarmed the officials. News of the incident reached the local military barracks and shortly afterwards about a dozen soldiers arrived at the scene, shooting indiscriminately to disperse the crowd and then pursuing those who fled. One man, **Simplicio Llorente**, was deliberately killed by a soldier outside his house. The same soldier also shot **Manuel Villarrubia**, first injuring him in a leg, then pursuing him into the sea and shooting him several times at close range. There has been no investigation into these killings nor has the soldier responsible been brought to justice. Both killings appear to have been unlawful extrajudicial executions.

The unrest continued until the following Sunday when the Bata-Malabo ferry brought a detachment of approximately 200 *Antorchas* and soldiers to quell the "rebellion". On landing, they went on the rampage, burning houses and crops and killing animals. Between 20 and 30 people were arrested and a few evaded arrest by fleeing to the jungle. Those detained were taken on the boat to Bata where they were imprisoned. Several Annobonese living in Malabo were also briefly detained.

Immediately after the incident, the authorities claimed publicly that a group of 50 armed agitators had been sent from Malabo by certain opposition parties and the Spanish government to stage a rebellion. They explained away the violence in Annobon by saying that the rebels had tried to kidnap the governor of the island and that the two deaths occurred during an exchange of fire between the soldiers and the intruders. Opposition parties and the Spanish government have categorically denied the allegations.

In September, the Annobonese imprisoned in Bata were tried in an unfair trial by a military court in Bata. Four were tried *in absentia*. All were charged with secession and an attempt against the security of the state. Two, **Orlando Cartagena** and **Francisco Medina**, were given 28-year prison terms (the prosecution had asked for the death penalty) and six received 20-year sentences. The remaining defendants were acquitted and released. They had no adequate defence and had no right of appeal against their convictions and sentences. Those

sentenced to prison terms were released under the terms of the 12 October amnesty. The UN Special Rapporteur on Equatorial Guinea had called for their release during his visit to Equatorial Guinea in early October.

Apart from the major waves of arrest already described, dozens of real or suspected government opponents have been arrested since August 1993 individually or in small groups. As elections approached, the intimidation of the population in general, and of political activists in particular, increased, particularly in rural areas, where people were reportedly forced to join the PDGE. Those who refused lost their jobs, had their salaries withheld and were often imprisoned for short periods.

Paulino Oná Obiang, the representative of the CPDS in Acurenam on the southern border of the mainland province of Río Muni was arrested in early August. He had refused to attend a rally in Bata on 3 August which President Obiang Nguema was due to address and had encouraged others to boycott the rally. He was held in Bata prison until late October when he was released uncharged under the terms of 12 October amnesty.

Others were arrested for their friendship or kinship with known government critics. Such was the case of **Francisco Engono Micué**, who was arrested in the street in Bata in late August 1993. He was beaten at the time of his arrest and in the car on the way to the police station, where he was held incommunicado. He was tortured in detention and sustained severe injuries to his arms, feet back and one eye. He was released uncharged several weeks later. About three months before his arrest, Francisco Engono Micué had been summoned by one of the most senior officials in Bata, who had threatened that unless his son, **Father José Luis Engono**, a Roman Catholic Priest, stopped criticizing the government "something" might happen to him. A few days before his father's arrest, Father José Luis Engono had gone into hiding: he had learnt that police were looking for him after he delivered a sermon critical of government policies. On several previous occasions he had received threats against his physical safety from security personnel and very senior government officials. Father José Luis Engono came out of hiding in mid-September, a few days before his father was released, and after the authorities gave written assurances that he would not be arrested or harassed.

In 1993 at least one person was sentenced to death and executed⁶. **Romualdo Rafael Nsogo**, an 18-year old student and member of the CPDS from Alum village in southeastern Río Muni, was convicted of a politically-motivated murder. He had been arrested on 28 August 1993 after a quarrel over a woman in which he reportedly killed one youth, **Antonio Bibang**, and seriously injured another. When the police searched his house they found CPDS documents.

⁶ It is impossible to say to what extent the death penalty is used in Equatorial Guinea as death sentences and executions are seldom reported.

This led to charges that Romualdo Rafael Nsogo had killed Antonio Bibang, who was said to be a member of the PDGE, for political reasons and that the CPDS had deliberately stirred up political violence. The CPDS published a statement denying any involvement and condemning the killing of Antonio Bibang.

Although he was a civilian, Romualdo Rafael Nsogo was tried by a military court in Bata on 16 and 17 September. He did not have access to a defence lawyer of his choice and he had no right to appeal against his conviction or sentence. He was executed on a beach near Bata on 18 September. Under Equatorial Guinea law, the crime of murder automatically carries the death penalty. Civilians can be tried by military courts although it is not clear in which cases.

As the elections approached, the level of intimidation rose. Publication of *La Verdad* was forbidden in late September after an editorial urged the *Antorchas* to stop violating human rights. Opposition leaders who were boycotting the elections were not allowed to travel to Río Muni or abroad.

Elections, held on 21 November, were won by the ruling PDGE. Six opposition parties participated but eight others boycotted the elections. According to reports less than 30 per cent of the electorate voted. The UN and several foreign governments had refused to send observers as the reforms necessary to ensure fairness had not been carried out.

The intimidation of pro-democracy activists did not relent after the elections. **Francisco Nsué Edú**, information secretary of the PP in Bata, was arrested for organizing a meeting to welcome the leader of the PP when he visited Bata after the travel restrictions on opposition leaders were lifted. He was severely ill-treated and required hospitalization. In Niefang, where an opposition party obtained an overwhelming majority, over 30 political activists were arrested while they were about to hold a meeting. They were released uncharged several days later.

On 10 December 20 students, including some women, were arrested as they left the Spanish consulate in Bata. They had been collecting text books sent from the *Universidad Española a Distancia*, the Spanish correspondence university. They were badly beaten in police custody. They were released uncharged a week later, after being made to pay heavy fines. The authorities subsequently claimed that the Spanish consul had been holding a meeting with opposition parties and expelled him.

In a further clamp-down on political activists, in mid-December the provincial governor reportedly barred the POC from engaging in any political activity.

4. Amnesty International's Recommendations

Throughout 1993 Amnesty International has continued to bring cases of individuals victims of human rights violations to the attention of government. It has also persistently urged the authorities to introduce safeguards to prevent human rights violations. These recommendations have largely been based on the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to which the government acceded in 1986 and 1987 respectively. Amnesty International was cautiously hopeful about the attempts to reform embarked upon early in 1993. However, as this report shows, the reforms soon proved to be a cosmetic exercise, but one which failed to mask the authorities' cynical disregard for the most basic human rights. Amnesty International regrets that once again the Equatorial Guinean authorities missed the opportunity to institute respect for civil and political rights.

Evidently Amnesty International and other human rights organizations would welcome any practical steps to introduce into law and to put into practice the human rights safeguards which are central to any meaningful political reforms.

As a first step, the government should stop harassing, detaining and torturing people for exercising their rights to freedom of expression or assembly. In particular, Amnesty International calls upon the government to curb the behaviour of the *Antorchas* and ensure that they act within the bounds of Equatorial Guinea's own laws as well as international standards governing the activities of law enforcement officials.

Amnesty International is aware of no laws or regulations governing the establishment, powers or procedures of the *Antorchas*. Nor does there seem to be any legal basis for the operation of other units of the security apparatus. The government should therefore make public any laws or regulations which do exist and reform them in the light of international human rights law.

Amnesty International is also calling upon the government to respond in detail to the cases described in this report - as well as to any others raised by other human rights organization or by the United Nations or Organization of African Unity's institutions focusing on human rights. It should investigate the cases, identify those responsible for human rights violations and bring them to justice.