

UA 128/96

Legal Concern / Torture /
Medical Concern

23 May 1996

EQUATORIAL GUINEA**Francisca Nzang Ebasi (f) and Norberto Esono**

Francisca Nzang Ebasi, the wife of the mayor of Nkimi, in the Centro-Sur province in the mainland region of Río Muni was arrested on 18 May 1996 apparently for no other reason than for being the wife of Alberto Ngomo Mfumu, a member of the *Partido del Progreso* (PP), Progress Party, and the first democratically-elected mayor of Nkimi. She was arrested at her home and taken to Niefang, the provincial capital, where she is being held without charge in police cells with her 10 day-old baby. It appears that she is being held to force her husband to return from Malabo, the capital on Bioko island, where he is currently attempting to meet the central authorities to discuss matters related to the Nkimi council.

Francisca Nzang Ebasi's husband, Alberto Ngomo Mfumu, has himself been briefly detained and ill-treated on several occasions since January this year apparently because of his political affiliation and for complaining that local authorities and members of the ruling *Partido Democrático de Guinea Ecuatorial* (PDGE), Equatorial Guinea Democratic Party, in the area are preventing the council from functioning.

In a separate incident, Norberto Esono, a councillor in Niefang council and member of the PP, was arrested on 19 May 1996 while he was visiting relatives in Mibamingea, a village in Niefang district. He was arrested by the government representative (*delegado de gobierno*) and three police officer who accused him of holding "illegal" meetings in the villages of the district. The police officers beat Norberto Esono on the head with their rifle-butts as they arrested him. Witnesses said that he was bleeding as he was put in a car and driven to Niefang city where he is being held at the police station. There are reports that he was again beaten on arrival and that, as a result, he is urinating blood and has a broken leg, for which he has not received medical treatment.

Since he was elected a councillor, provincial authorities have been putting pressure on Norberto Esono to desert his party and to join the PDGE. His refusal to do so appears to have been the cause of his arrest.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The first democratic municipal elections in Equatorial Guinea were held in September 1995. The ruling PDGE claimed victory but this was disputed by opposition parties and by the international observers to the elections. Since the elections, scores of members of opposition parties, particularly in areas where opposition parties won the elections, have been arrested and ill-treated. Democratically-elected councillors have been prevented from carrying out their functions by PDGE members and other authorities who in some areas set up their own council. The arrest and ill-treatment of political activists has not abated since presidential elections in February 1996, which were won by the incumbent President Teodoro Obiang Nguema. The situation is particularly grave in Río Muni.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern about the arrest of Francisca Nzang Ebasi, who appears to have been taken hostage by the local authorities to force her husband to return from Malabo;
- expressing concern about the arrest of Norberto Esono, who appears to have been arrested solely for his peaceful political activities and for refusing to join the ruling party;
- urging that both Francisca Nzang Ebasi and Norberto Esono be immediately and unconditionally released;
- expressing concern about reports that Norberto Esono has been subjected to torture and urging an immediate, independent inquiry and calling for anyone found responsible for this torture to be brought to justice;
- urging that Norberto Esono be given immediate access to appropriate medical care and legal representation of his choice.

APPEALS TO:

1) President

Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo
 Presidente de la República y
 Gabinete del Presidente de la República
 Malabo, República de Guinea Ecuatorial
Faxes: + 2409 3313
Telexes: 5405 GBNOM 5405 EG
Telegrams: Presidente Nguema, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea
Salutation: Su Excelencia / Your Excellency

2) Minister of Justice

Ignacio Milan Tang
 Ministro de Justicia y Culto
 Ministerio de Justicia y Culto
 Malabo, República de Guinea Ecuatorial
Telegrams: Ministro de Justicia, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea
Telexes: 5405 GBNOM 5405 EG
Salutation: Exelentísimo Señor / Dear Minister

3) Minister of Interior

Julio Ndong Ela Mangue
 Ministro del Interior
 Ministerio del Interior
 Malabo, República de Guinea Ecuatorial
Telegrams: Ministro de Interior, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea
Telexes: 5405 GBNOM 5405 EG
Salutation: Exelentísimo Señor / Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Foreign Minister

Miguel Oyono Ndong Mifunu
 Ministro de Asuntos Exteriores
 Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores
 Malabo, República de Guinea Ecuatorial
Faxes: + 2409 2320

and to diplomatic representatives of Equatorial Guinea accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 4 July 1996.