Human Rights Report: Equatorial Guinea
2016-2017

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I. BACKGROUND

In 2016 and 2017 Equatorial Guinea was plagued by systematic human rights violations and a deepening economic crisis. The nation failed to abide by its international commitments to improve the protection of human rights.\(^1\) Presidential elections in April 2016 and legislative elections in November 2017 were marred by irregularities, fraud, violence, and harassment against opposition leaders.

Space for civil society was further curtailed and there were numerous reports of human rights violations that included arbitrary arrest and detention and crackdowns on freedom of expression, assembly, and association. Particularly troublesome were the violent attacks on opposition leaders on the eve of the presidential election in April 2016\(^2\) and the detention of leading civil society leaders in April 2017.\(^3\)

Not surprisingly, President Teodoro Obiang Nguema claimed the April 2016 presidential election with 93.7% of the votes, and the Obiang family maintained their tight control over the legislative and the judiciary branches.

The economic crisis—a result of decreased oil production and a global drop in oil prices—deeply impacted the living conditions of the majority of Equatoguineans. Many families suffered through extended electricity and water shortages. Equatorial Guinea remained poorly-ranked in the UN Human Development Index, at 135 out of 188 countries.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Equatorial Guinea accepted 153 recommendations from other countries during the 2014 Universal Periodic Review process which required the country to ramp up its efforts to improve the protection of human rights and uphold democratic principles. See, UPR Info, Database of Recommendations.

\(^2\) See, Violence and Retaliation against Political Opposition, April 22, 2016.

\(^3\) See, EG must Release Civil Society Leaders, April 21, 2017.

\(^4\) See, Human Development Index 2016.
II. SUMMARY

1. Political Developments
   A. 2016 Presidential Election

President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo\(^5\) extended his record as the world’s longest-standing head of state, after winning his fourth election with 93.7% of the votes. The presidential election was clouded by allegations of vote rigging, violence, intimidation, and harassment against opposition leaders. The election, hastily called six weeks before voting day amidst hostilities and repression, was condemned by opposition parties.\(^6\) It was considered an unconstitutional maneuver by President Obiang to hold onto power. President Obiang did not provide any justifications for holding the election earlier than recommended by the Constitution.

During 2016 EG Justice recorded a long list of violations against members of the opposition leading up to the elections. The most severe attacks took place when security forces surrounded and fired their weapons upon supporters of the political party *Ciudadanos por la Innovacion* (CI, Citizens for Innovation). More than 150 people were reported to be trapped inside the party headquarters. At least six individuals were severely wounded, and 40 were illegally arrested. In Bata, 140 CI supporters were also arbitrarily detained.

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\(^5\) Obiang rose to power in 1979 and secured the possibility of two new consecutive 7-year terms as President due to the Constitutional amendments of 2011.  
Immediately after the elections Minister of Internal Affairs and Local Corporations Clemente Engonga Nguema Onguene ordered the indefinite suspension of the Centro de Estudios e Iniciativas para el Desarrollo (CEID, Center for the Studies and Initiatives for Development). The government alleged that the NGO promoted “messages aimed at inciting violence and civil disobedience” during a youth rally in January 2016, and cancelled the youth gathering.\(^7\) The government also cancelled an HIV awareness-raising campaign by a local theatre company due to comments made by a member of the audience during a play in August 2016\(^8\).

\textbf{B. Election of Equatorial Guinea to the UN Security Council}

The government of Equatorial Guinea won an uncontested seat as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in June 2017. The government effectively ensured the votes for its bid at the Security Council after hosting numerous regional and international events and high-level conferences, including the African Cup of Nations in 2015 and the African-Arab Summit in November 2016. Equatorial Guinea also gave large contributions to the African Union and other UN bodies, such as $30 million allocated to the Trust Fund for Food Security in Africa and $2 million in annual support for the UNESCO-Equatorial Guinea Prize for The Life Sciences.

The government ran a campaign promoting the country as a “model of peace, stability and rapid economic development” that has achieved “significant milestones in literacy, health care services, education and general infrastructure development.” But these self-proclaimed achievements used unsubstantiated statistics about the country’s progress\(^9\) and contradicted the findings of countless international reports including the Human Development Index and the International Monetary Fund’s Article IV reports.

\(^7\) See, Youth Voices Silenced, February 4, 2016.
\(^8\) See, Government Targets Independent Cultural Group, August 5, 2016.
C. 2017 Legislative Elections

On November 12, 2017, the ruling Partido Democrático de Guinea Ecuatorial (PDGE, Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea) won the vast majority of Parliamentary seats and Municipalities. The election was marred by irregularities including allegations of vote rigging and a blanket block of Internet-based communications such as WhatsApp.

Five electoral observers of opposition parties from Ciudadanos por la Innovación (CI, Citizens for Innovation) and Convergencia para la Democracia Social (CPDS, Convergence for Social Democracy) were arrested by the police in Bata on elections day. It was alleged that the individuals were disturbing the peaceful electoral process. Diosadado Esono, a member of CPDS, was arrested for destroying an electoral voting box because he thought the votes in it had been the result of government officials pressuring citizens to publicly announce their choice. All opposition party representatives were released on November 15, 2017 without charges.

2. Corruption Investigations

A. Biens Mal Acquis: Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue

In June 2016 President Obiang appointed a new cabinet in which his son Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue (Teodorín) was promoted to the position of Vice-president. Many political critics interpreted this as a strategy to clear Teodorín’s path to the presidency and/or shield him against the law enforcement investigations and lawsuits pending against him in multiple jurisdictions.

On October 27, 2017 a French court convicted Teodorín of embezzling and laundering millions of Euros in France. The Paris court found that “Mr. Nguema Obiang Mangue used his position as Minister of Agriculture and Forestry to channel millions of Euros

\[\text{\textsuperscript{10}}\text{ See, Obiang reúne más del 98\% de votos en unas elecciones tachadas de fraudulentas por la oposición, November 13, 2017.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{11}}\text{ See, Government blocks Internet and Arrests Opposition during Elections, November 15, 2017.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{12}}\text{ From 2012 to 2016 Teodorín was Second Vice-president for National Security. After the elections in April 2016 the cabinet had only one Vice-President position. See, Presidential Decree naming Vice-President of the Republic, June 22, 2016.}\]
from illegal fees charged to timber companies operating in Equatorial Guinea, to his personal bank accounts.”¹³ In 1998, Teodorín created Somagui Forestal, a company that facilitated the diversion of public funds to his private bank accounts in the United States, France, and other countries.

With these stolen assets, Teodorín acquired a collection of 18 luxury cars, artwork, jewelry, and properties in France, including a mansion on Avenue Foch valued at approximately 100 million Euros.¹⁴ The destination of the proceeds from the sale of the luxury items and millions of euros seized by authorities in 2012 is unclear, as France lacks a legal mechanism for the repatriation of the stolen assets.

In 2016, in an attempt to derail the ongoing case in France, the government of Equatorial Guinea filed precautionary measures before the International Court of Justice claiming breach of immunity given the position of Teodorín as Vice-president and seeking to retain the mansion on Avenue Foch as diplomatic premises. The ICJ court ruled in December 2016 that it lacked jurisdiction to halt the French case against Teodorín, clearing the path for France to pursue the case, but granted the protection of the mansion pending a final decision by the court.¹⁵

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¹³ Teodorín was appointed Minister of Agriculture in 1998 and held the position until 2011.
¹⁴ See, Teodorin's Troubles, October 3, 2012.
¹⁵ See, International Court of Justice, October 19, 2016.
B. Judicial Investigation in Switzerland

Adding to the list of international corruption cases against Teodorín, on October 31st 2016 Swiss prosecutors seized eleven luxury vehicles belonging to Teodorín. Among the cars seized by the Swiss authorities were a Bugatti Veyron valued at 2 million euros (USD 2.2 million) and a Swedish-made Koenigsegg One:1 valued at a base price of $2.8 million USD. On December 2, 2016 Dutch authorities seized Ebony Shine, a 76-meter luxury yacht owned by Teodorín. The yacht was sold in 2014 at an asking price of $120 million.\textsuperscript{16}

C. Spain: APDH vs. the Obiang Family and the Kokorevs

The case against President Obiang and some of his closest allies is moving forward in Spain. The main allegations of the case are that President Obiang and other government officials regularly diverted funds from the Equatoguinean Treasury by ordering Riggs Bank to make various transfers to private accounts held by a shell company controlled by President Obiang, who then used the laundered money to purchase properties in Spain. In September 2015 police arrested a Russian couple, Vladimir and Yulia Kokorev, and their son Igor who were accused of facilitating the transactions.\textsuperscript{17}

In February 2017 the Spanish Court in Gran Canarias unsealed all the court documents and lifted the gag order over the case. On September 28, 2017 a Spanish High Court ordered the release of Yulia and Igor on the condition that they should remain in Gran Canaria and report weekly to the police. Vladimir’s bond amount was reduced from 2 million euros to 600,000 euros.\textsuperscript{18} At the time of the release of this report Vladimir Kokorev remained in prison while the court started taking witness statements.

\textsuperscript{17} See, APDHE v. Obiang Family, updated February 23, 2017.
\textsuperscript{18} See, Yulia Kokorev sale de prisión y su marido sigue preso con menos fianza, September 28, 2017.
D. Switzerland-based Assets of Other Obiang Family Members

The 2016 publication of the Panama Papers revealed that Pastor Hassan Obiang Mangue, one of the youngest sons of President Obiang, was in charge of some of the Obiang family’s offshore operations and shell companies. Hassan Obiang appeared as the Director and main shareholder of Huambo Corporation. This shell company was managed by Portcullis TrustNet, which controlled 3000 other offshore companies.

3. Social and Economic Issues

A. 2016 Budget: Oyala

Despite the drop in oil prices globally, the Equatoguinean economy had Africa’s highest gross national income per capita at an estimated $21,056. The country’s oil-dependent treasury grew, mainly due to investments by large multinational corporations, which lead to some advances in the infrastructure sector. State public expenditure focused on flashy construction projects to the detriment of real and sustainable social sector investments. In 2016 nearly half of the year’s budget was diverted towards finalizing the construction of the new capital city of Oyala.

The government has yet to explain the need for a new capital city. In February 2017, the government relocated temporarily to Oyala, but the city remains empty and there is no government plan for how this new capital will be populated. This disproportionate investment in infrastructure, particularly spending on government buildings over the past decade, has not sufficiently improved quality of life and education in the country. For example, in 2007 there were 633 elementary public schools in the country, but by 2015 a total of 77 public schools had closed, representing a 12% decrease in the number of available schools.

21 See, “La paradoja de la abundancia” (The abundance paradox), April 16, 2015.
23 See, Guinea Ecuatorial en Cifras 2016 (Equatorial Guinea in numbers).
The education sector remains stagnant despite the increased income in the country. Grade retention and dropout rates remain high. Teachers lack adequate training and most schools lack suitable facilities, electricity, sanitation, or potable water.24 The health sector has also seen little progress. Life expectancy remains low. Maternal and child mortality rates continue to be very high compared to less-developed nations in the region. Nearly half of the population lives without drinking water. According to sources consulted by EG Justice, electricity cuts in public hospitals have disrupted medical interventions, and in some instances, led to the death of patients. For instance, in 2015 following a widespread electricity loss during the month of August, more than 15 babies died in their incubators in Bata.25 More recently, in September 2017 a young woman named Casimira Pilar Ayecaba died during a C-section in the hospital in Bata following a sudden electricity outing.26

C. 2017 Taxi Strike

In April 2017 the government of Equatorial Guinea increased the paperwork and cost of taxi licensing to 7 documents and up to $180 USD in total.27 This arbitrary move by the government caused major circulation problems in Malabo and Bata in late April and early May 2017. According to sources consulted by EG Justice, citizens were forced to walk miles due to the lack of public transportation. Taxi drivers responded with a strike

25 See, Muere Otros 6 Niños en el Hospital General de Bata en una Incubadora por falta de luz, August 30, 2015.
26 See, Muere Una Madre En Un Paritorio Por Culpa De Un Apagón Eléctrico, September 26, 2017.
27 See, Statements by the Director General of Traffic on the Regulation of Taxis, May 12, 2017.
in May 2017, for which they faced severe government backlash. Many drivers were arbitrarily arrested.28

President Obiang and his family continue to dominate many business sectors including aviation and pharmaceuticals, as well as supermarkets and construction. Endemic corruption and lack of rule of law impair business growth. According to the World Bank’s Doing Business Report, Equatorial Guinea was ranked 180 out of 189 countries.29

III. RECORDED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Despite a national constitution that purports to protect basic rights, numerous signed and ratified treaties, and commitments made at international forums to protect and uphold human rights, the government continued to systematically violate human rights with utter disregard for the rule of law, and with absolute impunity. The judiciary lacks sufficient independence to uphold the rule of law and protect human rights.\textsuperscript{30} It is

common for judges to request bribes in order to free detainees, many of whom were never duly charged with a crime.

There were widespread accounts of abuse and violence by security forces against civilians. Opposition leaders and dissidents were harassed, arbitrarily and illegally arrested, and tortured. Students and civil society leaders were harassed, and spaces for free expression were shut down without legal reasoning. There is a concerted government strategy to silence independent voices, regardless of the arena in which they operate. No investigations were launched into the violations committed by security personnel during the electoral campaigns. Known human rights violators continue to freely operate with impunity, while victims are still without any remedy.\(^{31}\)

1. **Freedom of Expression**

Equatorial Guinea is one of the most censored countries in the world. The space for free expression of any kind is extremely limited and there is no independent media in the country. The main broadcasters in the country in both television and radio are controlled by the government, and the only private TV station is owned by the President’s son Teodorín. The very few existing media outlets serve as propaganda for the ruling party. Security forces often harass journalists, and arbitrarily detain anyone suspected of engaging in any form of free expression. In 2016 and 2017, the presidential and legislative elections led to an increase in government efforts to suppress critical voices.

Press freedom and access to information are severely curtailed. Consequently, citizens rely on online media from the diaspora as sources of information. EG Justice has documented 20 sites that are routinely blocked by the government, including Facebook and Twitter; and independent sites such as Diario Rombe, Radio Macuto, ASODEGUE Segunda Etapa, Tiempos Canallas, EG Justice, and Guinea-Ecuatorial.net.\(^{32}\)

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\(^{31}\) See, Opposition Leader Detained and Beaten, December 15, 2016.

\(^{32}\) See, Equatorial Guinea: Ensure Media Freedom, April 12, 2016.
During the legislative elections, in a new low even by Equatoguinean standards, the government blocked WhatsApp and other internet-based telecommunication services for nearly a week.33

**A. Silencing Artists: Detention of Ramón Esono Ebale**

Cartoonist and human rights activist Ramón Esono Ebalé was arrested outside a restaurant in Malabo on September 16, 2017. Three people who identified themselves as members of the state security forces arrested Ramón and his two Spanish companions. During an interrogation at the police headquarters, Ramón was asked about his drawings and dissemination of drawings depicting President Obiang. He was also warned that his drawings could be considered defamation of the president. The Spanish nationals were interrogated about their connection to Ramón and freed after several hours.

Ramón was brought before a judge on September 27, 2017 but he has not been formally charged, and he continues to be held in preventive detention without bail, a situation which according to Equatorial Guinea’s laws could extend up to 2 years. The police have accused Ramón of engaging in counterfeiting and money laundering.

**B. Arrest of Journalists Samuel Obiang Mbana and Justo Enzema**

On June 23, 2017 police arbitrarily arrested and seized the equipment of journalists Samuel Obiang Mbana and Justo Enzema, who along with other 9 journalists were covering a press conference led by a coalition of opposition political parties in Malabo at a location near the headquarters of the Convergencia para la Democracia Social (CPDS) party. Fifty police officers led by General Police Director Pedro Mba Obama arrived to thwart the event and cordon off the area. On their way to Malabo’s jail, known as “Guantanamo,” Samuel Obiang and Justo Enzema were released and their equipment was returned without memory cards.

33 See, Government blocks Internet and Arrests Opposition during Elections, November 15, 2017
C. Suspension of the CEID Youth Forum

On January 31, 2016, the Governor of Litoral Province Amado Nguema Owono ordered the suspension of a youth forum organized by the NGO Centro de Estudios e Iniciativas para el Desarrollo (CEID, Centre for the Study and Initiatives for Development) in Bata, and ordered the police to take all necessary steps to impede the gathering. The authorities alleged that some of the event organizers were residents of another city, that the message of the gathering did not conform to the message of the Ministry of Education, and that the organization’s legal registration and event authorization documents were insufficient to sanction the youth forum. The forum had brought together more than 150 youths from across the country to exchange experiences, discuss their role in society, and propose solutions to persisting problems that disproportionately affect them.34

D. Use of RTVGE for PDGE Propaganda and Other Media Restrictions

The state broadcasting machinery of RTVGE was used to disseminate propaganda about the presidential family and cover the ruling party’s activities during the electoral period, putting opposition leaders and critical voices at a disadvantage.35

On April 14, 2016 twelve journalists from the African TV channel Afrique24 were illegally detained for more than five hours upon arrival at Malabo, despite holding permits from the Ministry of Information authorizing them to cover the election process. The journalists were accused of belonging to a terrorist organization before being ultimately allowed into the country after the intervention of the Minister of Interior and President of the National Electoral Commission. The journalists were unable to cover the elections or conduct any sort of journalistic work, as all their activities were cancelled. They left the country on April 17.36

34 See, Youth Voices Silenced, February 6, 2016.
36 See, Severe Crackdown on Opposition and Media, April 20, 2016.
E. Opposition Campaigners Harassed and Beaten

Political activities by opposition parties were routinely curtailed. Security forces illegally detained and beat Rafael Mbela, campaign coordinator for the opposition party Union Centro Derecha (UCD, Center Right Union), on April 15, 2016. Mr. Mbela was arrested in Bata, the second largest city in the country, while he was peacefully campaigning and using a megaphone to promote his party’s message. Alleging he was disturbing the peace, the police transported Mr. Mbela to a military base where he was brutally beaten and robbed of all the money he was carrying with him. He was released the same day without charges.37

2. Freedom of Assembly

Notwithstanding constitutional protections that allow citizens to freely associate and peacefully demonstrate, the authorities continued to restrict the free exercise of these rights, illegally suspending the activities of civil society organizations and unlawfully arresting and detaining citizens that attempt to peacefully assemble.

A. Suspension of the Bocamandja Theatre Group's HIV Campaign

On July 20, 2016, Grupo Teatral Bocamandja, a cultural theater group, was ordered to cancel its activities related to an HIV prevention campaign because the government concluded that their artistic work amounted to sedition. Bocamandja had successfully launched the campaign in collaboration with UNICEF, Asociación de Mujeres en la Lucha contra el VIH/SIDA (AMUSIDA), Asociación Cinematográfica de Guinea Ecuatorial (ACIGE), and the Ministry of Health.

37 Ibid.
Performances were conducted as planned for five days in five cities before the government crackdown. After the July 20th performance, the group conducted a Q&A session, during which a participant from the audience raised questions about the willingness of the government to actually support HIV patients and provide medical care. A government representative in attendance suspended the session and accused the theater group of “inciting youth to revolution.” The actors were threatened with arrest and ordered to leave the mainland and return to the capital city of Malabo.38

B. Violent Incident at Ciudadanos para la Innovación Headquarters in Malabo

On April 21, 2016, three days before the elections, the Equatoguinean government carried out violent attacks against members of opposition party Ciudadanos por la Innovación (CI, Citizens for Innovation). Security forces surrounded the party’s headquarters in Malabo and fired bullets and tear gas, gravely wounding at least six individuals. Approximately 150 members, including the wounded, remained huddled inside the compound for 2 days before they were allowed to leave the premises.39

3. Freedom of Association

2016 and 2017 offered a unique opportunity for the government of Equatorial Guinea to showcase its ability to open up dialogue with opposition parties and respect democratic values during the presidential and legislative elections. Instead, the government systematically violated the rights of

38 See, Government Targets Independent Cultural Group, August 5, 2016.
39 See, Violence and Retaliation against Political Opposition, April 22, 2016.
citizens to participate freely in political activities and critics of the government were viciously harassed.

A. Attacks on Independent Civil Society Groups: Suspension of CEID

On March 2, 2016 Equatorial Guinea’s Minister of Internal Affairs and Local Corporations, Clemente Engonga Nguema Onguene, ordered the indefinite suspension of all activities by the Centro de Estudios e Iniciativas para el Desarrollo (CEID, Center for the Studies and Initiatives for Development). The government alleged that comments made during a youth forum organized by CEID in January 2016 constituted “messages aimed at inciting violence and civil disobedience among the Equatoguinean youth,” and violated the country’s public order law and associations law. CEID contested the suspension and eventually resumed its activities due to the lack of response to their administrative appeal, based on a 30-day limit on suspensions regulated by the administrative law.

B. Detention of the Leadership of CEID: Enrique Asumu and Alfredo Okenve

On April 16, 2017 Enrique Asumu, the President of CEID, was arbitrarily stopped at the airport and prevented from boarding a flight to Bata city without any legal justification. The next day, Minister of National Security Nicolas Obama Nchama ordered the detention of Mr. Asumu and Mr. Alfredo Okenve, the Vice-president of the same organization. Both men were interrogated for more than 5 hours and later taken to the main city jail, which is commonly referred to as “Guantanamo.” The Ministers contended that CEID’s anniversary activities violated a suspension order previously issued in March 2016. They imposed a fine of 10 million CFA (approximately $16,000 USD). Mr. Asumu and Mr. Okenve were released on April 25 and May 3, 2017 respectively after their families, fearing for their safety, paid the illegal fines. Both men were detained

40 See, Pre-Election Civil Society Crackdown, March 30, 2016.
41 See, Reanudación de las actividades (Resume of activities), September 12, 2016.
42 See, EG must Release Civil Society Leaders, April 21, 2017.
without charges and were never taken in front of a judge, despite the 72-hour requirement under Equatoguinean law.43

**C. Restrictions on the Ciudadanos por la Innovación Party**

On July 28, 2016, in yet another egregious example of restrictions to freedom of association, particularly for opposition political parties, the judicial authorities in Malabo found Gabriel Nze Obiang Obno, Secretary-General of the Ciudadanos por la Innovación Party (CI, Citizens for Innovation), guilty of slander. While the sentence focused on the party’s leader it further exacerbated the highly restrictive political environment under which opposition parties must operate.

The sentence validated unfounded and malicious allegations made by the president of the ruling Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE) accusing Mr. Nse of promoting messages inciting to violence and civil disobedience during his presidential campaign. On September 29, 2016, Mr. Nse was ordered by a judge to pay 200 million CFA (more than $300,000 USD) in compensation and was disqualified from the exercise of political activities.44 Dismissing the party’s appeal right before the Parliamentary and Municipal elections,45 the Supreme Court confirmed the sentence on October 26, 2017. Based on the court’s ruling Mr. Nse is banned for life from any political activities.46

This court decision sends a chilling message to all political actors, as it aims to crush any attempts by political opposition groups to challenge the Obiang’s regime.

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44 See, Sentence against Gabriel Nse Obiang, September 29, 2016
45 See, Hearing Gabriel Nse, November 7, 2016
46 See, Definitive sentence on the complaint presented by Osa Osa Ecoro against the leader of CI, October 27, 2017
4. Freedom of Movement

Police and military roadblocks remained a major impediment for free movement throughout 2016 and 2017. While the regime claims the roadblocks are needed to fight illegal immigration and terrorist threats, in reality military and police officers often put up roadblocks to extort and demand bribes from travelers — particularly targeting foreigners.

A. Ubiquitous Roadblocks

In 2016 there was a sharp spike in the restriction of movement and in the harassment of opposition leaders during the electoral process. Anselmo Santos Eko Anvom and Urbano Elo Ntutum, leading members of Convergencia para la Democracia Social (CPDS), were arbitrarily arrested in Bata on January 16, 2016. They were driving around the city in a car, distributing leaflets and using a megaphone to announce a campaign meeting scheduled for the next day. CPDS had a duly-signed permit authorizing the meeting.

The police accused the two men of causing public disturbances by mentioning issues that went beyond announcing the meeting and the electoral census. The police also impounded the car the two men were driving, as well as another car from CPDS local headquarters. The police forced them out of their car and threw them into a police car. Once in Bata Police Central Station, the deputy director-general got angry and hit Anselmo Santos on the head with his hand. Both men were held incommunicado for two days and were finally released without charges 9 days later.47

In another incident on March 5, 2016, Dr. Wenceslao Mansogo, a member of the CPDS party leadership, was threatened at a roadblock by a military officer who has heavily under the influence of alcohol. While inspecting the vehicle, the officer fired a shot and refused to allow Dr. Mansogo through. Government officials passing by saw the incident

and ordered the officer to allow Dr. Mansogo to pass. There was no investigation of the incident.\textsuperscript{48}

**B. Restrictions on Opposition Party Campaign Activities**

In August 2016 the CPDS party traveled through the nation conducting a national outreach campaign, but faced many hurdles and increased hostility by security forces, despite having a permit from the Ministry of Interior authorizing the campaign. On August 16, 2016 on their way to the city of Kogo, the military police detained a CPDS convoy including the Secretary General of the party Andres Esono Ondo for a few hours at a military roadblock, until high-level officials within the Ministry of Interior ordered their release. In the cities of Mikomeseng and Mbini, the Mayors continuously refused to facilitate access to public meeting rooms for the opposition leaders, even though they had permits to use these state facilities. There was also increased police presence in the streets of both cities to intimidate opposition leaders and prevent supporters from participating in the events.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{48} See, “Un militar dispara contra el vehículo del Doctor Wenceslao Mansogo en una barrera militar” (Militar shots against Doctor Wenceslao Mansogo’s vehicle in a military roadblock), March 7, 2016.

\textsuperscript{49} See, “La difícil gira de verano de CPDS. EL Gobierno pone muchas trabas a su buen desarrollo” (The difficult summer campaign of CPDS. The government puts forward many obstacles), August 27, 2016.
5. **Children’s Rights**

   **A. Ministerial Ban on School Enrollment for Pregnant Girls**

   The most severe violation against children’s’ rights came in the form of a government education policy. On July 18, 2016 the Ministry of Education issued a Ministerial Order forbidding “access to classrooms to pregnant students.” According to the government order, schoolgirls were to show the results of a pregnancy test before enrollment. A positive test result would lead to the student being turned away by school administrators. The order claimed to be aimed at combating crime and bad habits among students. During a TV interview, the Deputy Minister of Education Ms. Maria-Jesús Nkara argued that the measure “encourages schoolgirls to take precautions and prevent unwanted pregnancies.”

6. **Torture and Ill-treatment**

   Torture and ill-treatment continue to be a widespread practice among police and security officials in Equatorial Guinea despite being forbidden by law. EG Justice, along with national and international human rights groups has documented numerous cases of detainees who reported being beaten and tortured during interrogation.

   Article 5 of the Law to Prevent Ill Treatment and Torture provides criminal penalties against public officials who use violence to extract confessions, but the Equatoguinean judiciary rarely prosecutes state agents alleged to have committed torture or other ill treatment.

   The regime has repeatedly denied that torture takes place in the country. For example, in its February 2014 submission to the United Nations Human Rights Council the Equatoguinean government stated that it has a firm policy “not to tolerate the practice of torture or arbitrary detention, on penalty of drastic coercive measures.” These statements were contradicted by President Obiang during a November 2015 speech to

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50 See, Government Discriminates against Pregnant Schoolgirls, October 26, 2016
the PDGE Congress when he said that “tendons of criminals should be cut” so people could identify them in the streets.52

**A. Detention and Torture of Celestino Okenve**

On May 1, 2016 police officers arbitrarily detained Celestino Okenve, a pro-democracy activist and leader of the political opposition group Union Popular (UP, Popular Union). While waiting to board a plane, he was taken into custody by three security officers to the Central Police station in Malabo without a judicial warrant. He was detained and tortured for more than 7 hours by security forces, at the express request of the Minister of Security, Mr. Nicolas Obama Nchama, who supervised the torture session. Mr. Okenve was questioned about his involvement with the CI, his political activities, and his presence in Equatorial Guinea. He was released after being asked to sign several copies of his written testimony. He was driven to the airport and allowed to board the next plane to Madrid. He was cautioned by the officers that he would face serious repercussions if he came back to Equatorial Guinea.53

**B. Systematic Inhumane Treatment at Police Stations**

In 2016 and 2017 there was an increase of ill-treatment by police officers while exercising their duties and at police stations. Several videos have circulated on social media depicting many cases of police abuse, including manhandling, beatings, and stripping detainees of their clothing, among other violations. For example, on January 14, 2017 a man was brutally beaten and stripped naked before he was thrown into a police car to be transferred to a police station54. On April 2017, another web-based news outlet documented the beating of a detainee who had his hands and feet tied.55

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52 Obiang quer “cortar os tendões” dos pés aos delinquentes, November 19, 2015.
53 See, Illegally Detained and Tortured Pro-Democracy Activist and Opposition Leader, May 13, 2016.
54 See La Policía Tortura, Desnuda Y Maniata Públicamente A Un Supuesto Delincuente En Lamper, January 14, 2015.
55 See, Torturas en las dependencias policiales de Guinea Ecuatorial, April 18, 2017.
C. The Death Penalty

On September 16, 2017 the national broadcaster RTVE’s night news reported on the death sentences to two prisoners held in Evinayong, Raimundo Nfube Onva, known as ‘Cuchi Cuchi’, and Fausto Luis Nve Adugu, known as ‘Fause. At the time of writing this report, the death sentences had not been carried out. According to sources consulted by EG Justice, Mr. Nfube and Mr. Nve belonged to a hit squad that killed Damián Motuhu Alogo, a teacher posted near Mikomeseng in Equatogial Guinea’s mainland, in October 2016.

Despite promising to abolish the death penalty, which was a condition to join the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP), Equatorial Guinea continues to request and impose death sentences in its criminal procedures.

7. Rule of Law

Judicial corruption, executive power over the judiciary, and the absence of a strong legal framework oriented to protect human rights continue to weaken the rule of law. Police and judicial officials routinely fail to abide by legal provisions regulating arrest and detention, arrests without warrants, prolonged detentions without judicial oversight, and the withholding of information from detainees about their arrest and detention. Family members and lawyers are constantly denied access to detainees.

A. Detention of Joaquin Elo Ayeto

On November 29, 2016 Joaquin Elo Ayeto, a CPDS member, was unlawfully stopped by military officers dressed as civilians. He was severely beaten and his cellphone and wallet were taken away. The officers retaliated against Mr. Elo for posting a picture of one of them on social media after the officer refused to pay a toll and was causing a traffic jam in Malabo in mid-November. Mr. Elo posted a comment with a picture denouncing the attitude of military officers on the island and confirmed that he paid the
A formal claim was filed before a trial court in Malabo in December 2016 and is still pending before the court.

On June 27, 2017 Mr. Elo was arbitrarily arrested for a second time. In this case, the police accused him of creating an illegal organization with violent goals. Mr. Elo is one of the founders of the civil society movement Somos+ which promotes human rights and documents violations of basic rights. The group has been active on social media with a Right to Education campaign and is documenting the poor state of schools and neighborhoods in Malabo. He was illegally detained for 3 days, no charges were pressed against him, and he was not seen by a judge within 24 hours, the limit stipulated by Equatoguinean criminal law.

B. Detention of Raimundo Bernabe Nnandong Abeso

Civil society activist Raimundo Bernabe Nnandong Abeso Nchama, better known as “Ruso,” was arbitrarily arrested on November 12, 2017 outside a polling station in Bata, after he attempted to take a picture with a family member. Ruso is a prolific artist, a member of the cultural group Locos por Cultura, and the director of the Biyeyema theater group. Ruso was not seen by judge within 24 hours as stipulated by Equatoguinean criminal law and was finally freed on November 15 without charges.

C. Detention of Benjamin Ndong

On May 25, 2017 Benjamin Ndong, better known as Jamin Dogg, was arbitrarily arrested by police after being followed for several days by what looked like plainclothes police officers. In mid-May, Jamin Dogg launched a rap song supporting the Taxi strike in Malabo and Bata. He was detained for two days and freed without charges. During

56 See, Dos oficiales del ejército de Guinea Ecuatorial agreden a un activista político (Two military officers attack opposition member), November 30, 2016.
57 See, Paysa Eló Ayeto presenta denuncia por la agresión sufrida por parte de dos militares (Paysa Elo Ayeto files claim for attack in the hands of two military officers), December 2, 2016.
59 See, Government blocks Internet and Arrests Opposition during Elections, November 15, 2017.
60 See, La Policía de Guinea Ecuatorial detiene en Malabo a un rapero que apoyaba la huelga de taxistas, May 27, 2017,
his arbitrary detention, Jamin was able to see his family but was never brought before a judge.

**D. Detention of Ciudadanos por la Innovación Members in Bata and Malabo**

On April 22, 2016 in Malabo, police surrounded the CI party headquarters and arbitrarily arrested 40 individuals. In Bata, at least 140 individuals waiting for the arrival of a party delegation and its Secretary General, Gabriel Nze Obiang, were arrested at the airport and taken to Bata’s Police Central Station. CI reported that some individuals were beaten in prison, and access to lawyers and family was restricted. The opposition members were released after the 72 hours permitted under Equatoguinean law.\(^{61}\)

**E. Detention of CORED Opposition Group Family Members**

On February 12, 2016 Mr. Mabale Eyang and Mr. Mosuy Eseng, relatives of Filiberto Mabale, the secretary-general of the political party in exile Coalición de Oposición para la Restauración de un Estado Democrático (CORED, Opposition Coalition for the Restauration of a Democratic State in Equatorial Guinea), were arrested without a warrant and held at Malabo Central Police Station for about a week. On February 20 they were transferred to Black Beach prison, were they remain in detention.\(^{62}\) According to sources interviewed by EG Justice, a judge held their first hearing in March 2016, and has since then verbally requested 10 million CFA (more than $1500 USD) for their release. Both detainees were finally released after 9 months of arbitrary detention in mid-November 2016 without charges.

\(^{61}\) See, Violence and Retaliation against Political Opposition, April 22, 2016.

\(^{62}\) See, Relatives of Political Opponent Unlawfully Detained, March 8, 2016.
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