

**EQUATORIAL GUINEA:
HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS AND
ACTIVISTS PAY A HIGH
PRICE FOR SPEAKING
OUT**

AMNESTY II

, 33

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER OR AN ACTIVIST IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA?

- Being a human rights defender, activist or member of the opposition in Equatorial Guinea means being on a regular basis the victims of **harassment, intimidation, arbitrary detention** or even **torture**.
- Since Equatorial Guinea's last review in 2014, **the situation** of human rights defenders, activists and members of the opposition **has not improved**.
- Those who seek to peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of expression and assembly are **beaten, unlawfully arrested or detained**.

A CHALLENGING LEGAL FRAMEWORK

NGOs activities continue to be regulated by **Law 1/1999, 24 February 1999**.

This law is a real challenge and a threat to the functioning, development and independence of NGOs

- There is **no** mention that NGOs can work on **human rights**
- Imposes **financial constraints** which limit NGO capacity to receive donations from abroad.
- Requires reporting by NGOs on the progress status of their programs every 3 months. No submission of report is cause of **suspension** for 3 months
- Imposes supervision and evaluation of the NGO objectives **by the Ministries**.

A CHALLENGING AND DANGEROUS DAY TO DAY WORK

It is not just about the law limitations. The day to day work for human rights defenders is also a challenge.

For distributing pamphlets on the street calling for the boycott of the Africa Cup of Nations in 2015

Celestino Okenve, coordinator of the Solidarity Forum for Equatorial Guinea was **detained** for over two weeks **without charge** and with restricted access to a lawyer, before being released. He was told that what he was doing was against the President.



A CHALLENGING AND DANGEROUS DAY TO DAY WORK

Center for Development Studies and Initiatives (CEID)

In March 2016, the Ministry of the Interior ordered the Center for Development Studies and Initiatives to suspend its activities indefinitely and threatened it with a fine of 10 millions CFA francs (US\$16,000) fine for violating this order.

On 17 April 2017, the police **detained** human rights defenders **Enrique Asumu and Alfredo Okenve**, president and vice president of the Center CEID. Their detention exceeded the 72-hour period permitted by law.

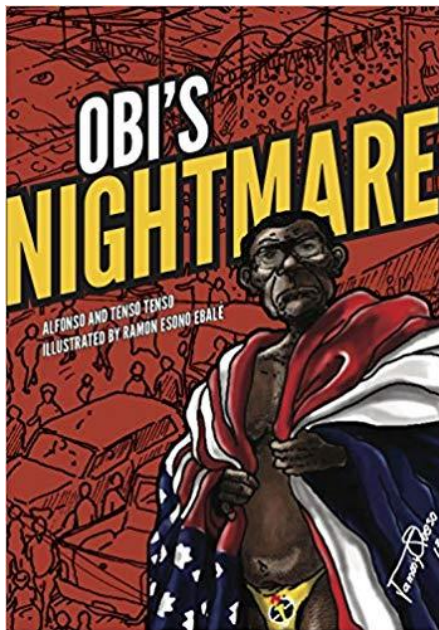
A CHALLENGING AND DANGEROUS DAY TO DAY WORK



On 27 October 2018, **Alfredo Okenve**, was the target of an attack.

At around 8pm, he and one of his brothers were leaving their home when another car appeared and blocked the road. Two armed men in plain clothes said to Alfredo “It is you we are looking for.” The men dragged him into their vehicle. They drove Alfredo to a forested area where for two hours they **severely beat** him all over his body using the butts of their guns and sticks. He was left there in the forest.

WHAT DO YOU SEE HERE? DO YOU THINK THAT THEY ARE JUST A FEW CARTOONS?...



EQUATORIAL GUINEA: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND ACTIVISTS PAY A HIGH PRICE FOR SPEAKING OUT

A CHALLENGING AND DANGEROUS DAY TO DAY WORK

They were the reason the cartoonist and activist **Ramón Esono Ebale** was sent to prison for almost 6 months.

He was living abroad for several years.

He returned to Equatorial Guinea on 29 August 2017 to renew his passport.

On 16 September 2017 he was **arrested** when leaving a restaurant in Malabo. He was taken to the Central Police Station and questioned about his cartoons being critical of President Teodoro Obiang. He was sent to the Black Beach Prison. He was finally **charged with “counterfeiting money”**.



A CHALLENGING AND DANGEROUS DAY TO DAY WORK

On 27 February 2018, Ramón was tried in Malabo after more than five months in pre-trial detention. **The charge of “counterfeiting money” was dropped when the main witness retracted his testimony against Ramón and admitted that he had been asked to falsely accuse Ramón of counterfeiting activities.**

During all the months he was imprisoned,

an international coalition of organizations working on **freedom of expression** and Ramón’s wife and daughter didn't stop fighting for his release.



A CHALLENGING AND DANGEROUS DAY TO DAY WORK

Right now, as we are talking, activist **Joaquín Elo Ayeto** is recovering from the **torture** he received at the end of February / beginning of March this year.

Joaquín is member of the Coordination of the Somos+ Platform and the Executive Commission of the political party Convergence for Social Democracy (*Convergencia Para la Democracia Social*), CPDS.

➤ On **Monday 25 February 2019** at 6:00am he was at his home in Malabo, when seven police officers came in and asked him if he was Joaquín Elo Ayeto. When he identified himself he was **arrested. No reason** was given for his arrest. When he asked, he was only told: **“You will find out later”**. He was taken to the Central Police station.



A CHALLENGING AND DANGEROUS DAY TO DAY WORK

At the Police Station he was **tortured while he was interrogated**. He was being accused of having information on a plot to kill the president. On Friday 1 March he was sent to Black Beach Prison. Since then his lawyer neither his family have been able to see him (updated).

Joaquín had already been arrested in 2 previous occasions

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA

First and urgent recommendation:

Immediately and unconditionally release of Joaquín Elo Ayeto (To be updated)

Recommendations about national legislation

- Adopt and implement legislation which recognizes and protects the human rights of human rights defenders;
- Immediate reform of Law 1/1999 regulating NGOs, including in line with the recommendations by NGOs, in order to facilitate their registration and enable their full and independent functioning.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA

On the National Human Rights Framework

- Fully cooperate with the international and regional human rights mechanisms and extend a standing invitation to the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

On the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

- Investigate all threats and attacks against human rights defenders and activists and bring to justice those suspected to be responsible;
- Refrain from using language that stigmatizes, abuses, disparages or discriminates against human rights defenders including by characterizing them as “criminals”, “foreign agents”, “terrorists” or “threats to security.