

# THE OBSERVATORY

for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

L'OBSERVATOIRE

pour la Protection des Défenseurs  
des Droits de l'Homme

EL OBSERVATORIO

para la Protección de los Defensores  
de Derechos Humanos

## PRESS RELEASE

### GUINEA-BISSAU: Human rights defenders at risk, amid growing tensions

Paris-Geneva, April 2, 2009. *The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), in the framework of their joint programme, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, denounce the death threats against Mr. Luis Vaz Martins, President of the Guinean League for Human Rights (LGDH) and more generally the current tensions that prevail in the country and put human rights defenders at risk.*

On April 1, 2009 at around 5.30 pm, an unidentified individual dressed in civilian cloth and armed with a makarov gun visited LGDH offices and asked for Mr. **Luis Vaz Martins** with a threatening tone. Mr. Vaz Martins was out of the office at that moment.

This visit came a few hours after the issuance of a LGDH press release, denouncing the serious human rights violations committed by elements of the Bissau-Guinean military over the past weeks. The press release referred in particular to the attack sustained by Dr. Francisco José Fadul, leader of the Party for Democracy, Development and Citizenship (PADEC) and President of the Court of Public Auditors, interrogated and tortured on April 1 at his home, after he denounced the growing influence of the military in public life. Mr. Fadul is currently undergoing intensive care in hospital.

Over the past days, LGDH also denounced the torture suffered from March 23 to 26 by lawyer Pedro Infanda, the defendant of the former chief of the armed forces José Américo Bubo Na Tchute, currently in exile. This lawyer was reportedly asked by his assailants to stop defending the former military head and to refrain from criticising the armed forces. He was then put under police custody. As of April 2, 2009, he was in intensive care unit.

The Observatory expresses its deepest concern for the security of LGDH staff members, in particular its executive representatives Messrs. Vaz Martins and **Bubacar Ture**, in an attempt by the military and its supporters to silence everyone denouncing human rights violations committed in the country, particularly the abuses of the military.

The Observatory urges the European Commission Delegation in Bissau as well as European Union (EU) Member-States embassies in Guinea-Bissau to take immediate action in the light of the above-mentioned elements, so as to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of LGDH members as well as of all human rights defenders, in line with the [EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders](#).

The Observatory also urges the United Nations Office in Guinea-Bissau to take any action required to ensure the protection of LGDH and civil society members.

The Observatory more generally calls upon the authorities of Guinea-Bissau to ensure that acts of harassment against human rights defenders in the country be stopped, in conformity with the [1998 United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders](#).

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*Un programme de la FIDH et de l'OMCT - A FIDH and OMCT venture - Un programa de la FIDH y de la OMCT*

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