

**Testimony of Tutu Alicante Leon, Executive Director, EG Justice  
Statement Before EU Parliament**

**April 1, 2014**

Dear Chairwoman Lochbihler and distinguished Members of Parliament:

I feel extremely privileged and want to express my deepest gratitude for this opportunity to testify once again about the situation of human rights in Equatorial Guinea. Last time I testified before you, via teleconference, I updated you about what was happening to human rights defenders and civil society activists in Equatorial Guinea. Since then, the situation has not improved. The government of Equatorial Guinea continues to disregard basic human rights. Rule of law, transparency, and democracy all continue to be foreign concepts in Equatorial Guinea.

President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, longest ruling president in the world, is also here in Brussels today, talking about the intricate subtleties of the Spanish Language in Africa. So, while I tell you about rampant corruption—the sole functioning institution in Equatorial Guinea—President Obiang is here rubbing elbows with investors in the Spanish Chamber of Commerce, trying to entice them to invest in Equatorial Guinea.

Paradox is the one word that best describes Equatorial Guinea.

There is an Equatorial Guinea with the highest GDP per capita in Africa. This is the Equatorial Guinea that the government portrays as ripe for investment. There is no poverty in that Equatorial Guinea, and no human rights violations. This is the Equatorial Guinea that foreign dignitaries see when they visit Equatorial Guinea.

I am here to talk to you about the other Equatorial Guinea. The one ranked by Freedom House among “the worst of the worst” with respect to basic freedoms.

The Committee to protect Journalist considers this Equatorial Guinea a media freedom predator. Transparency International ranks it among the most corrupt countries in the world.

Reports from Amnesty International, Human rights Watch, the Open Society Justice Initiative, UN organizations, the US State Department, and human rights defenders in Equatorial Guinea all conclude: the Government of Equatorial Guinea continues to violate **all** human rights with absolute impunity.

Last week in Geneva, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights finally released Equatorial Guinea's national report for the Universal Periodic Review. The content of this document is a travesty. It makes a complete mockery of the UN and of global efforts to protect human rights.

Despite the state's vast resources—a per capita gross domestic product of over \$32,000, the highest ranking of any African nation, Equatorial Guinea has the largest gap between its per capita wealth and its human development score. Over 75% of the population still lives in destitute poverty, with less than \$2/day; without clean water or basic sanitation facilities.

The Government of Equatorial Guinea has not taken any steps to guarantee **the access to free education** in Equatorial Guinea. There are still major discrepancies between rural and urban areas.

Similarly, the Government has not improved the infrastructure of hospitals and health care centers. The general public does not have access to the two state-of-the-art hospitals that the government will point out it has built. **Access to needed medication and supplies remains a serious challenge.**

The government has not taken any steps to improve poor peoples' attainment of the right to adequate housing. The President, his family, and collaborators have unleashed a massive campaign of land grabs and forced evictions that have rendered thousands of poor Equatoguinean families poorer. Some public housing has been built, but these are sold at prices

that are beyond the reach of those who truly need them. Thousands of Equatoguineans who, three to four years ago, advanced a down payment on these houses but have yet to receive a house or their money back.

There is no rule of law and no legitimate state institution in Equatorial Guinea. The only institution that pervades all spheres of society in Equatorial Guinea is corruption, led by President Obiang and his family.

The judicial system and parliament are totally subservient and dependent on the will of the political elite.

There is no freedom of expression. No alternative radio, TV, or newspapers.

There is no freedom of association. A friend recently joked: it is easier to go skiing in Equatorial Guinea—on the equator—than to register a human rights organization there. Four years ago, I was in Geneva with human rights lawyer Ponciano Mbomio, civil Society activist Alfredo Okenve, and human rights defender/political activist Wenceslao Mansogo. Since then, Alfredo, the civil society activist was fired from his job as a professor and private companies are forbidden from hiring him. Wenceslao, the political activist, was framed, tried, and given a two year sentence, of which he served only 4 months, thanks to international pressure. Ponciano, the lawyer, had his license suspended for two years. Because he represented Wenceslao.

There is no freedom of assembly. Attempts by civil society or political activists to hold peaceful rallies are violently squashed by the state security apparatus.

There is no freedom of movement. There are military-police roadblocks every 20-30 kilometers. Both police and customs control are located between the two main cities of Bata and Malabo. Imagine if every time you traveled between Brussels and Antwerp you had to be fingerprinted and photographed. That is what is happening in Equatorial Guinea. Recently, Mr.

Weja Chicampo, a well-known political opposition leader, was detained at the airport in Malabo as he planned to enter the country, forced back onto a plane, and expelled to Madrid, Spain.

Arbitrary and incommunicado detentions are the most recurrent violation in Equatorial Guinea.

On December 23, 2013, in Nigeria, the government of Equatorial Guinea kidnapped Mr. Cipriano Nguema Mba—a Belgian refugee. He was smuggled to Equatorial Guinea and remains held in incommunicado detention. His wife and five children, all living here in Liege, have not seen him since December, and they are unlikely to ever see him again. Nine other Equatoguineans—including a Spanish citizen, Ticiano Obama Ncogo—were also simultaneously detained in December, and remain incarcerated without charge or trial.

We are ruled by a kleptocrat. A man who—along with his family—has decided to engage in grand larceny of the country's wealth and mortgage the future of our nation.

Prior to oil discovery in Equatorial Guinea, President Obiang and his family received kickbacks from European and Asian contractors in the timber industry in Equatorial Guinea. They extorted money from fishing rights granted to Spanish and other fishing companies. They pilfered illicit funds from importing rights for retail goods, and collected payments for the right to carry out development programs in the country. Lastly, they provided a safe haven for money laundering—the movement of large cash proceeds from the drug trade. Thus, even prior to oil, we were already being ruled by thugs and by thieves. They moved from blue collar to white collar crime with the advent of oil.

Today, major infrastructure projects with dubious social purpose are undertaken for the purpose of self-enrichment and money laundering. Ports and airports, basilicas and golf courses, even a brand new capital city, are built in the middle of the forest. Close to 90% of the value of

these infrastructure projects are not included in the national budget. Thus, these are corruption and money laundering schemes.

Meanwhile, torture remains endemic and un-punished, despite a law banning it.

Roberto Berardi: Italian. Detained Feb 2013. Charged with stealing. Sentenced to 2 Ys and 4 mo. Fined 1.2 Mill Euros. Mr. Berardi is still in jail, where he has been tortured. Here are other cases of torture.

(Images)

The government does not respect the right to life. These are the names of people recently killed by police and military in Equatorial Guinea.

The government claims it passed a law abolishing the death penalty. In fact it manufactured a presidential resolution, not a law. This resolution temporarily suspends the death penalty. I insist. This is a temporary moratorium, not a law outright banning the death penalty. It is simply a plot to gain accession into the Community of Portuguese Language Countries. 15 days before issuing this presidential resolution, the eight prisoners on death row at the time were given a 30-minute notice and promptly executed. Family members were not informed and have not received the bodies.

Dear Chair and Distinguished Members of Parliament. I have tried to make the case that the government of Equatorial Guinea does not respect any human rights. All human rights are violated in Equatorial Guinea. The government does not care about democracy and it is not concerned about the rule of law. This is a rogue government. It has started to spread its rotting tentacles of organized crime, corruption, and impunity into other African nations, including Swaziland, Liberia, Sao Tome, and others. Allow it to fester and soon the cancerous spill-over effect might be overwhelming. However, stand up with the people of Equatorial Guinea for

freedom and human dignity; stand up for the rule of law, freedom of expression, association, assembly and you would be averting a potentially risky situation in the Gulf of Guinea.

Use all possible and available channels to put pressure on the government of Equatorial Guinea:

Stop rolling out the red carpet for this Keltocratic regime in Belgium, Spain, France, etc,

Scrutinize and freeze illicitly acquired assets that end up in European banks; and

Support civil society and political reform initiatives.