

### **Reverend Samba, PoC, Equatorial Guinea, 2008**

*On 7 June 2008, Reverend Bienvenido Samba Momesori was released from prison in Evinayong, Equatorial Guinea. Prior to his release, Amnesty International had been working on his case for several years and members around the world had taken action on Reverend Samba's behalf.*

On Sunday 26 October 2003, Reverend Bienvenido Samba Momesori was arrested in his church in Malabo, on Bioko Island, Equatorial Guinea. For two weeks the authorities denied they were holding Reverend Samba, before admitting to his family that he was being detained at Black Beach Prison in Malabo. Later he was transferred, apparently when the authorities heard that a Red Cross delegation was looking for him. The authorities again refused to disclose his whereabouts, but in early December 2003, Reverend Samba's family learned that he was detained in Evinayong Prison on the mainland.

When news of Reverend Samba's detention reached Amnesty International, he became the subject of a number of letter writing campaigns by members in various countries. The organization considered Reverend Samba's imprisonment without trial to be politically motivated, due to his known peaceful political opinions and his ethnic origin. Thousands of letters were written to Reverend Samba and also to the authorities holding him. Amnesty International delegates presented some of these letters to the Ambassador for Equatorial Guinea in the United Kingdom, who promised to transmit concerns to relevant authorities. In 2007, the Archbishop of Canterbury in the UK wrote an article in association with Amnesty International for New Statesman magazine, in which he called on readers to write letters and acknowledged that, while he had the freedom to speak out safely on political issues, 'for some, this is not the case.'

Reverend Samba was released from prison on 7 June 2008, under the terms of a presidential pardon on the occasion of President Obiang's 66th birthday. Two days later, Reverend Samba told Amnesty International:

**I want to thank you and congratulate you for the work you do and for getting me free. I knew of your work because two years ago I received a letter in prison from a woman in Spain who said she was a member of an NGO. It was a miracle that I received it. I also received the letters sent to me via the lawyer Fabian. And when you published your annual report I heard on Radio Exterior de España [the Spanish world service radio] my name mentioned and that you have been working on my behalf since my arrest in October 2003. Thank you for your solidarity.**

External links:

New Statesman article available at: <http://www.newstatesman.com/human-rights/2007/02/equatorial-guinea-samba-trial>