

Guinea-Bissau Police News

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In a sign that rule of law is not properly functioning in Guinea Bissau, two policemen from different branches of the country's police force were recently assassinated and the culprits appear to be the police themselves. The dead body of a member of the judicial police, which reports to the country's justice department, was dumped in front of a judicial police station on 12 April. A day earlier, the policeman who was killed had allegedly killed a policeman from the special intervention force which answers to the interior minister. "In this country everyone takes the law into their own hands," said a diplomat in Bissau who asked to remain anonymous. "It's not just civilians who don't trust the justice system. Those who are supposed to enforce the system don't trust it either. "The judicial policeman was killed just hours after the interior ministry's special intervention force raided the judicial center where he was being held, pending criminal charges. In the confusion of taking him, 10 other accused criminals reportedly escaped from the centre and may still be at large. International organisations have frequently alleged that Guinea Bissau's security forces commit human rights abuses and are involved in drug trafficking. Amnesty International reported in August 2007 intimidation and harassment of journalists and human rights defenders who report on drug trafficking. "The organization has received information that four journalists as well as a leading human rights defender, Mario Sa Gomez have all gone into hiding for fear of being arrested and possibly tortured," the report said. Gomez had stated on national radio that the most effective way of tackling drug trafficking was to dismiss all the civil and military officials who are implicated. The director of the judicial police, Lucinda Aukarie, who diplomats say is untainted by drug trafficking and corruption, is reported to have submitted her resignation following the recent actions by the interior minister's force. She said she could no longer uphold the law or guarantee the safety of the judicial police for whom she is responsible.