

[From the "Focus on Africa" program]

[Text] A Nigerian ship owner has some unsavory tales to tell about life in a Mozambique jail and the slow workings of Mozambique justice. He was picked up and detained in December when one of his ships apparently technically contravened Mozambican regulations. He languished in jail, trying to get a hearing and finally got out in April when he bought his freedom. He is Peter Ighofose and has come to London to complain. David Haggie asked him if he had ever been charged by the Mozambique authorities:

[Begin recording ] [Ighofose] There were no charges until after about 3 months in jail.

[Haggie] And were you given access to lawyers and access to the Nigerian authorities in (?that time)?

[Ighofose] The Nigerian Embassy did not come to see me until after 2 weeks in jail.

[Haggie] When they came, did they start championing your cause?

[Ighofose] As far as I am concerned, I don't think they did much at all.

[Haggie] Were your experiences of not being charged for so long typical of people in the prison, did you find?

[Ighofose] That is very typical. There are people in that jail that have been there for 4 years without a charge.

[Haggie] Did you spend the whole time in the same prison, or were you moved about?

[Ighofose] No, I spent 2 weeks in Cadeia Civil [preceding name in Portuguese] [Civil Prison] and then I was transferred to Cadeia Central [preceding name in Portuguese — FBIS] [Central Prison] after I complained so much about the smell from the toilets and not being able to eat my food because of the smell, I just couldn't eat in that kind of atmosphere after some time.

[Haggie] And, in this new prison, were things better?

[Ighofose] Well, in the new prison there was a bigger space because you were allowed to come out of the cell three times a day and then you could walk around the orchard within the yard. Three times if you were in the open cells, but not those who were in the Cela Disciplinar , [preceding name in Portuguese] [Disciplinary Cell] what they call CD.

[Haggie] Now, since you have come to London you have been alleging that as well as people being badly fed and kept in bad conditions, people were badly treated. What is your worst memory of what was happening during your time in jail?

[Ighofose] The worst memory was having to see people, how they were flogged like animals, specially an instance where a man was caught having sexual relationship with another unwilling man who reported the matter to the police. Then, of course, he was called out and then chained and beaten up and after that thrown into what they call the punishment area which is the CD, or Cela Disciplinar.

Now, another instance was this man who was brought in, who was supposed to have argued with a policeman. Then his hands were tied with a rope. By the time this rope was removed from his hands, his arms were so swollen and then, of course, there must have been some blood clots. The next day he died in the Cela Disciplinar.

There was also an instance where a child, a young boy under 14, bribed somebody with his own shirt in the kitchen to give him a little bit extra food. And, of course, this boy, because he bribed for food and he was caught, he was then displayed to everybody in the parade ground and then beaten up like a goat, and, of course, thrown into the Cela Disciplinar.

[Haggie] Did you come across any women prisoners, and what sort of conditions that they are held in?

[Ighofose] Oh, the women prisoners I met at Cadeia Central, I mean Cadeia Civil, were so badly treated, even to the extent that I even met one of the inmates who was a well-off Mozambican who used to make it her duty of paying the policemen and then in the night the women were invited across — because we were separated by just a wall — the women were invited across the wall, go to the police officers' room where the (?hut) was just concrete, and this (?guy), because of only 2,000 meticals, was given a women to sleep with and afterward she was thrown back and said, ok, good night.

[Haggie] Are you saying the women were acting as prostitutes?

[Ighofose] They were using them as prostitutes and even...

[Haggie interrupting] Were they receiving the money?

[Ighofose] The police got the money and the women got nothing [end recording]

Well, we asked the Mozambican Government to comment and they said that Mr Ighofose was making numerous errors of fact; that no children under the age of 15 were held in Mozambican jails, and that no prisoners have died in detention this year. It was admitted that the diet of Mozambican prisoners was bad, but this reflected the bad diet of Mozambique's people in general under the present war conditions.