

PUBLIC

AI Index: AFR 56/001/2005

UA 08/05

**Harsh prison conditions/ Torture or ill treatment /
Death penalty**

13 January 2005

TANZANIA

At least 15 prisoners on death row

On 3 January, at least 15 prisoners sentenced to death in the main Ukonga maximum security prison in the capital, Dar es Salaam, started a hunger strike protesting about their harsh prison conditions. They are reportedly protesting at a poor prison diet and being severely beaten whilst being held in overcrowded prison cells. Amnesty International is concerned for their safety.

The prison authorities have rejected the complaints and claim that the prisoners' diet has improved. Prior to this, the Ministry of Home Affairs reportedly announced that prison conditions in Tanzania had improved overall.

Ukonga prison holds more than 3,000 inmates. Of these, 90 have been held under sentence of death for up to 20 years after courts found them guilty of murder. Many say their appeals have not been heard and some of them are no longer visited by relatives who think that they have been executed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Tanzania retains the death penalty for treason and murder. According to official statistics, there were 387 prisoners under sentence of death in Tanzania in August 2004. The last executions were carried out in 1995 and in April 2003, President Mkapa commuted 100 death sentences. Non- governmental organizations (NGOs) and faith groups in Tanzania have continued to campaign for the abolition of the death penalty.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases, regardless of the gravity of the crime, the guilt or innocence of the condemned, or the method used to kill the prisoner. The death penalty is an affront to human dignity as it violates the right to life and is a cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, contrary to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of death row prisoners on hunger strike in Ukonga prison in Dar es Salaam;
- urging the Tanzanian authorities to provide all necessary medical attention to those on hunger strike and to ensure that they are given regular access to family and lawyers;
- asking the authorities to take immediate action to ensure that prisoners under sentence of death are not subjected to torture or ill-treatment by being beaten and kept in overcrowded conditions;
- requesting that the prison authorities conduct a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into all allegations of torture and ill-treatment;
- calling for the authorities to provide minimum standards of detention for those being held, in line with the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners;
- urging the government to commute these and all other death sentences in Tanzania on the grounds that the death penalty is a violation of the right to life and of the right to be free from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Benjamin William Mkapa
President of the United Republic of Tanzania
P.O. Box 9120, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Fax: + 255 22 211 3425
Salutation: Your Excellency

Mr Ramadhani Mapuri
Minister of Home Affairs
Ministry of Home Affairs
P.O. Box 9223, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Fax: + 255 22 211 8223
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Mr Bakari Mwapachu
Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs
Ministry of Justice
P.O. Box 9050, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Fax: + 255 22 211 3236
Salutation: Dear Minister

The Commandant
Ukongga prison
P O Box 9091, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
Salutation: Dear Commandant

and to diplomatic representatives of Tanzania accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 February 2005.