

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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UK: Full circumstances into fatal shooting must be investigated

Amnesty International is concerned about the incident on 22 July 2005 in which plainclothes officers shot dead Jean Charles de Menezes, a Brazilian national who had been working in the UK for the last three years. Initial police statements stated that he was a suspect linked to the bombing incidents which have taken place in London, since over 50 people were killed in coordinated attacks on 7 July. However, on 24 July the Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police stated categorically that Jean Charles de Menezes had no involvement in any suspicious activities, and that he had been shot dead as a result of a mistake. Initial eyewitness accounts indicated that Jean Charles de Menezes was shot five times in the head at point blank range after having been pushed to the ground. Amnesty International expresses its deepest sympathy to the family and friends on his tragic death.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission has begun its investigation into the circumstances of the shooting, which Amnesty International recognizes took place against a background of heightened security. Amnesty International will be monitoring the progress of the investigation. The organization urges the investigation to examine the full circumstances leading up to the shooting, including what the terms of the current rules of engagement are, including the policy which permits officers to "shoot to kill", i.e. to shoot in the head, suspects believed to be suicide bombers, reportedly codenamed Operation Kratos; how the operation was planned; how the police officers were briefed and what orders they were given; whether a senior officer was contacted before action was taken; whether a sufficient warning was given; and whether the action taken by the officers was fully in compliance with international human rights standards concerning the use of force in the context of law enforcement. In particular, the organization urges that there be full public scrutiny of the actions of state agents and agencies involved, including the Metropolitan Police and the security services, so as to ascertain fully whether the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes was lawful.

The inquiry must be prompt, thorough, independent and impartial and must comply with relevant international standards, including the UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, as well as with the relevant case-law of the European Court of Human Rights under Article 2 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms enshrining the right to life. Specifically, the investigation should consider whether the force used was no more than absolutely necessary and a proportionate response in the circumstances. There must be full public accountability for the actions of the state and lessons have to be learnt to prevent another such incident.

