

PUBLIC

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Threats/Harassment

15 May 2003

JAMAICA

Inhabitants of Crawle, Clarendon

Killed:

**Kirk Gordon (m)
Matthew James (m)
Angela Richards (f), aged 44
Lewena Thompson (f), aged 33**

The community of Crawle in Clarendon, Jamaica have complained of police harassment and threats following what appear to be the extrajudicial execution of four persons on 7 May. Police officers have reportedly constantly visited the community in unmarked vehicles in an effort to intimidate them and several eyewitnesses to the killings have stated that they are only willing to testify, if their safety can be guaranteed.

In a police statement, officers of the Crime Management Unit claim to have gone to a house in Crawle to arrest wanted persons. Upon approaching the house, the police claim to have come under gun fire, which they returned. When the firing ceased the officers discovered the bodies of Angela Richards, Lewena Thompson, Kirk Gordon and Matthew James. All four were pronounced dead upon arrival at hospital. The police also claimed to have recovered several guns from the house.

The local residents however, vehemently denied the police version of events. In numerous statements to the media and Jamaican human rights groups, residents stated that the police arrived in an unmarked white bus with tinted windows and drove past the house of the deceased. The vehicle returned a short time later and came to a sudden halt. "The police then came out [of the bus] and began firing wildly at everybody in the yard. One of them chased and fired several shots at me. I had to run through the bushes" one resident told the media.

According to other eyewitnesses the police shot and killed Kirk Gordon and Matthew James before dragging their bodies into the yard. The officers then went into the house where Angela Richards and Lewena Thompson were hiding, along with Thompson's eight-year-old daughter. The daughter was reportedly removed from her mother's arms and told to wait outside. Shots were then heard and the police later removed their bodies from the house. Members of the community claim the police then removed what appeared to be guns from the bus and placed them in the house. The Commissioner of Police has however, publicly denied that the guns were planted by the police officers.

Community members are extremely concerned for their safety and according to one report, have cancelled a wake for the deceased because of fears over police brutality.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International continues to hold grave concerns around the numerous unlawful killings committed by the Jamaican police force. Despite assurances from the Government that there is no impunity for police officers implicated in extrajudicial executions, the laying of charges against officers is extremely rare and trials almost unheard of. The last officer to be convicted of an unlawful killing committed while on duty was in 1999. Despite overwhelming evidence of extrajudicial executions in numerous cases, only one officer has been tried (and acquitted) since then.

The Crime Management Unit in particular have been implicated in numerous violations of human rights.

It is commonplace for officers to threaten witnesses to unlawful killings and the relatives of the person killed. Amnesty International has continually received reports of the harassment of those who have sought justice for the killing of their relatives.

For further information on the situation in Jamaica please see *Jamaica: Killings and violence by police: How many more victims?* AMR 38/003/2001 and *Jamaica: The killing of the Braeton Seven - A justice system on trial*, AMR 38/005/2003

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

To the Director of Public Prosecutions:

- requesting that the Office of Public Prosecutions take a proactive role in ensuring that suspected unlawful killings by police officers are adequately investigated and that any other violations of the law committed by officers, such as the threatening of members of the community at Crawle, are prosecuted;

To the Commissioner of Police, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Minister of National Security

- Expressing concern around the high number of apparent extrajudicial executions in Jamaica;
- requesting that they ensure the community of Cawle is protected from further violations of their human rights and are not intimidated by police officers in any way;
- requesting that any individual who offers testimony that implicates police officers in unlawful killings is fully protected from physical threats or other forms of intimidation;
- requesting that they ensure the killings of Angela Richards, Lewena Thompson, Kirk Gordon and Matthew James, impartially and comprehensively investigated in line with international laws and standards that govern the investigation of suspected extrajudicial executions;
- expressing concern around the lack of trials and convictions of police officers in Jamaica despite the high number of individuals killed by the Jamaican Constabulary Force in suspicious circumstances;
- asking that they take action to bring an end to the apparent impunity enjoyed by police officers accused to committing unlawful killings.

APPEALS TO:

Dr Peter Phillips
Minister of National Security
Ministry of National Security
Mutual Life Building - North Tower
2 Oxford Road
Kingston 5 Jamaica

Telegram: Minister of National Security, Kingston, Jamaica
Fax: + 1 876 906 5104
Email: minister@mnsj.gov.jm
Salutation: Dear Minister

Francis A Forbes, LL.B.
Commissioner of Police
103 Old Hope Road
Kingston, Jamaica

Telegram: Commissioner of Police, Kingston, Jamaica
Fax: +1 876 927 7516
Email: www.infochan.com/jcf
Salutation: Dear Commissioner

Kent Pantry
Director of Public Prosecutions

PO Box 633
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King Street
Kingston, Jamaica

Telegram: Director of Public Prosecutions, Kingston, Jamaica

Fax: +1 876 922 4318

Salutation: Dear Director of Public Prosecutions

COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of Jamaica accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 June 2003.