

8 December 2000

AI Index AMR 56/004/2000 - News Service Nr. 232

ST LUCIA: Allegations of an extra-judicial execution must be investigated

Amnesty International today expressed concern that officers in St Lucia responsible for shootings, including an alleged extrajudicial shooting are protected by a culture of impunity in the Caribbean island.

On 14 November Alfred Harding was shot dead by police in La Clery, near St. Castries. Media reports have suggested that he was ordered by an off-duty police officer to lie down and was shot twice, once in the thigh and once in the spine. The government has been highly critical of his lawyer and of other human rights defenders who have sought to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Amnesty International says that the execution of Alfred Harding and other recent police shootings have highlighted the urgent need for the government of St. Lucia to hold to account those police officers involved in human rights violations.

Yesterday the witnesses of the shooting spoke on national television, whilst the Prime Minister is expected to make a statement on the case later today.

"It is essential that every law enforcement official suspected of using excessive force is investigated and, where appropriate, brought to justice," the organization said today. "The people of St Lucia have a right to expect that state agents guilty of violations are brought to justice."

The organisation has today written to the government, reminding it of its international obligations to prevent the use of excessive force by the

police, including possible extra-legal, arbitrary and summary executions, by ensuring that:

- the Harding and other cases are promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigated
- investigations include adequate autopsies, collection and analysis of all physical and documentary evidence and witness statements
- witnesses, defence lawyers and those conducting investigations are protected from violence and threats of violence or intimidation
- full written findings are made available to the public
- families of victims are adequately compensated if and when those responsible for violations are convicted

\ENDS

public document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>