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Papua New Guinea: Amnesty International welcomes commitment to eliminate gender-based violence, and urges investigation of sorcery-related killings and forced evictions

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Papua New Guinea

Amnesty International shares the concerns raised by 18 States with regard to discrimination and violence against women in Papua New Guinea.¹ We welcome the government's support of recommendations to eliminate gender-based violence, including by addressing impunity for such violations;² to reinforce the legal framework for the prevention of violence against women;³ and to extend an invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women.⁴ We call on Papua New Guinea to put in place coherent plans at the national, provincial and local levels for the prevention of violence against women, to ensure women's access to emergency accommodation, healthcare services, counselling and legal advice, and to ensure that professionals are trained to respond to female survivors of gender-based violence in a manner which respects women's human rights and prioritizes their safety and welfare.

In Papua New Guinea sorcery is sometimes believed to account for a sudden or unexplained death or illness and the person thought to be responsible may be killed. Women are more likely to be accused of sorcery, especially if they are suffering from HIV/AIDS. In one case from January 2009, a group of men stripped a woman naked, gagged, tortured and burned her alive at Kerebug rubbish dump because they suspected her of practicing witchcraft. We urge Papua New Guinea to review the law on sorcery and sorcery-related killings as recommended in the review,⁵ to investigate all sorcery-related killings to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice, to develop and implement strategies to prevent further sorcery-related killings, and to challenge any link between women with HIV/AIDS and the notion of sorcery.

In 2009, Amnesty investigated circumstances surrounding the forced evictions in Porgera, Western Highlands. We found that aspects of the police's conduct violated both domestic and international human rights law when they burned down houses and destroyed personal belongings, gardens and livestock. We call on Papua New Guinea to implement the recommendation to increase scrutiny over extractive and logging industries to reduce the negative effect on the enjoyment of human rights.⁶ We also urge the government to investigate forced evictions in Porgera, to hold to account those responsible for human rights abuses, and to provide remedies to those affected, including alternative accommodation and compensation.

We regret that Papua New Guinea has rejected recommendations to confirm the de facto moratorium on executions towards the total abolition of the death penalty.⁷

¹ A/HRC/18/18, paragraphs 78.3 (United Kingdom), 78.4 (Argentina), 78.13 (Poland), 78.14 (Mexico), 78.15 (Hungary), 78.16 (Brazil), 78.17 (Argentina), 78.18 (Canada), 78.19 (Norway), 78.20 (Republic of Korea), 78.44 (Slovenia), 78.45 (Norway), 78.46 (Canada), 78.51 (Australia), 78.52 (Malaysia), 79.16 (Slovenia), 79.21 (Germany), 79.22 (Poland), 79.23 (France), 79.24 (Spain), 79.27 (Thailand), 79.28 (Haiti), 79.48 (Maldives).

² Ibid., recommendation 78.52 (Malaysia).

³ Ibid., recommendations 78.16 (Brazil), 78.17 (Argentina), 78.18 (Canada), 78.19 (Norway), 78.20 (Republic of Korea).

⁴ Ibid., recommendations 78.44 (Slovenia), 78.45 (Norway), 78.46 (Canada).

⁵ Ibid., recommendations 78.21 (Czech Republic), 78.22 (Poland).

⁶ Ibid., recommendation 79.58 (Maldives)

⁷ Ibid., recommendations 80.1 (Switzerland), 80.2 (France)

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Papua New Guinea on 30 September 2011 at its 18th session. Prior to the adoption of the report of the review Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above. Amnesty International also contributed to the information basis of the review through its submission on Papua New Guinea: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA34/005/2010/en>

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