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EGYPT: STOP THE KILLINGS AT THE BORDER

The Egyptian authorities are failing to ensure that their security forces are up to the job of policing the border with Israel in line with international standards, Amnesty International warned today. The organization is calling for immediate action by the Egyptian authorities to check their border forces' excessive use of force against unarmed migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, following a series of shootings which have made this the bloodiest week at the border since September 2009.

This week four foreign nationals – all believed to be unarmed migrants – were reportedly shot dead by Egyptian border forces when they attempted to cross the border into Israel. Five have now been killed this year while trying to make the crossing, the first on 8 January; a further two others were reported to have been seriously injured by gunfire.

Reported killings are at now their highest since September 2009, when eight foreign nationals were killed trying to cross the border into Israel, including four on a single day on 8 September 2009. In 2009 at least 19 foreign nationals were reportedly shot dead while trying to cross the border. Scores of others were seriously wounded by gunfire.

Despite the spate of killings, the Egyptian authorities have continued to fail to hold their forces at the border to account, claiming in a 14 September 2009 statement that the policing of the border demonstrates Egypt's "respect to the international law and international commitments".

The killings are a stark reminder that, despite repeated warnings by Amnesty International and other organizations, Egypt's security forces have still not been given adequate instructions or training to conduct border policing. The Egyptian authorities contend that the border guards give verbal warnings and fire warning shots to get foreign nationals to retreat from the border. However, they continue to routinely resort to lethal force against foreign nationals and Amnesty International is not aware of clear instruction being given not to use lethal force except as a proportionate response to a lethal threat. The authorities are also refusing to facilitate the visit of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.

To date, no investigations are known to have been opened into the killings, or incidents where excessive force may have been used, in breach of international standards such as the UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions, which require that all cases of suspicious deaths in custody or at the hands of state agents are promptly and impartially investigated.

While Egypt's security forces are charged with maintaining border security in difficult circumstances, it remains the duty of the Egyptian authorities to ensure that their forces respect the right to life, adhere to international standards and uphold international human rights law.

Amnesty International again calls on the Egyptian government to ensure that its border guards and all other law enforcement officials are instructed that they should not use lethal force except in

accordance with the strict limitations imposed by international standards, and are not deployed into situations in which they may be required to use force until they have been adequately trained in such standards – in particular, the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials (the Code of Conduct) and the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials (the Basic Principles). As an immediate step, the Egyptian authorities should publish and disseminate in a form that is readily accessible to members of the public the rules and regulations on the use of force by the security forces.

As Egypt's human rights record in coming under scrutiny this month in the framework of the United Nations' Universal Periodic Review, Amnesty International is also calling on members of Human Rights Council to probe such killings and to ensure that Egypt overhauls the instruction of its security forces.

Background

The use of lethal force, which began in mid-2007, may result partly from pressure from the Israeli authorities on the Egyptian government to reduce the flow of people crossing the border into its territory without authorization.

While states have the right to exercise authority over their border and to regulate entry into their territory, any measures taken in this regard must not come in conflict with or violate internationally recognized human rights law and standards.

The Universal Periodic Review is an opportunity for the UN Human Rights Council to examine the human rights record of all member states. Each country is reviewed every four years with the aim of ensuring states are meeting all of their human rights obligations

Read More

- [Suggested recommendations to states considered in the seventh round of Universal Periodic Review, February 2010](#), 1 December 2009.
- [Egypt: Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review: seventh session of the UPR Working Group of the Human Rights Council, February 2010](#), 1 September 2009.

Public Document

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