

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Impunity for violations committed on the occasion of the 2001 Genoa G8 summit an intolerable stain on Italy's human rights record

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the 2001 Genoa G8 summit, Amnesty International regrets having to reiterate once again its call for accountability in relation to the human rights violations committed at that time by law enforcement officers, and is concerned that failure to address structural legal and institutional shortcomings may result in impunity. Impunity for abuses such as those committed during this summit is an intolerable stain on Italy's human rights record.

From 19 to 21 July 2001, the Italian city of Genoa hosted the so called 'Group of eight – G8 – summit', an international forum of the governments of the eight most industrialized nations. It is estimated that over 200,000 people participated in "anti-globalization" demonstrations on the streets of Genoa at that time. Although the vast majority protested peacefully, some demonstrations involved violence, resulting in significant injuries to people and extensive damage to property. By the end of the summit, one protester, Carlo Giuliani, had been shot dead by a law enforcement officer, and several hundred people, including demonstrators, journalists and some police officers had been injured in the context of clashes between the police and some demonstrators. Allegations of human rights violations committed by law enforcement officers, prison officers and medical personnel against protestors emerged immediately after the G8 and continued to do so in the following months and years. Evidence presented related to ill-treatment during the demonstrations in the streets of Genoa as well as at the Armando Diaz school, which was used as a dormitory for demonstrators and as a media centre for the Genoa Social Forum, and in the military barrack of Bolzaneto, that the authorities had designated as temporary detention centre for the identification of persons deprived of liberty.

Over the years, Amnesty International has welcomed the opening of the trials on the events in the Diaz school and the Bolzaneto detention centre as important steps towards ensuring accountability. However, 10 years after the Genoa G8, the organization regrets that Italian authorities have failed to establish effective mechanisms to prevent police ill-treatment or to adopt concrete measures to ensure effective investigation, and where appropriate prosecution, of all law enforcement agents involved in torture, ill-treatment, excessive or arbitrary use of force and other human rights violations. The organization is also concerned about the lack of accountability for many of the human rights violations committed during the Genoa G8.

Instances of arbitrary and abusive use of force and other ill-treatment perpetrated in the streets of Genoa during the demonstrations have for the most part not been investigated and almost no one has been held to account. In most cases perpetrators of these abuses could not be identified and only a few victims obtained civil compensation.

In May 2010, the Genoa court of appeal found 25 of the 28 members of police forces accused of abuses committed in the context of the police raid at the Diaz school in the night of 21-22 July, guilty of various criminal offences including grievous bodily harm and sentenced them to up to five years' imprisonment. The court found that people had been beaten relentlessly and

systematically with batons, punched, kicked and hit with pieces of furniture; as a result of the abuses, some victims ended up in life-threatening conditions. However, prosecution of a number of offences including bodily harm, was time barred. In March 2010 the same court recognized that most of the crimes that had taken place at the temporary detention centre of Bolzaneto, including grievous bodily harm and arbitrary inspections and searches, could not be prosecuted due to the statute of limitations, but still ordered all of the 42 accused, including members of police forces and medical personnel, to pay civil damages to the victims. The court also imposed prison sentences of up to three years and two months on eight of the accused. People held in Bolzaneto had among others things been beaten with batons, kicked, punched, insulted, threatened with sexual violence and more beatings and forced to stand in stress positions for long periods, in some cases for over 20 hours, even if wounded. Both sets of proceedings are currently pending before the Italian Court of Cassation.

In March 2011, the grand chamber of the European Court of Human Rights ruled that there was no violation of article 2 (right to life) of the European Convention of Human Rights in relation to the death of Carlo Giuliani. In May 2003 the inquiry into the fatal shooting of Carlo Giuliani by a law enforcement officer then performing his military service in the *Carabinieri* force, ended with the judge of the preliminary investigation ruling that the officer had acted in self-defence, making legitimate use of his firearm, and should not be charged.

A sizable body of evidence shows that protesters were ill-treated by law enforcement officers both during the street demonstrations and at the Armando Diaz school and in the Bolzaneto temporary detention facility. However, as the crime of torture is not foreseen in domestic legislation, officers who may have tortured demonstrators have never been charged with this crime. Moreover, as noted above, prosecution of many of the criminal offences with which officers were charged was time-barred, leading to impunity. Furthermore, none of those convicted has been suspended from duty pending appeal. Scores of other law enforcement officers believed to have participated in assaults could not be identified because their faces were hidden by masks, scarves or riot helmets and they wore no numbers or name tags.

Amnesty International deeply regrets that, 22 years after ratifying the UN Convention Against Torture, Italy has not yet incorporated torture as a specific offence in domestic legislation. Italy was called on to address this gap also in the context of the Universal Periodic Review before the UN Human Rights Council in 2010, but decided not to accept such a recommendation.

Amnesty International also recalls that Italy has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and establish an independent National Preventive Mechanism for the prevention of torture and ill-treatment at the domestic level.

Italy has never conducted an independent, thorough and effective inquiry into the policing of the demonstrations around the 2001 G8 summit, as repeatedly requested by Amnesty International in view of the scale and gravity of the allegations.

The organization is concerned that Italy has to date also failed to establish a National Human Rights Institution consistent with the "Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions (the Paris Principles)". Such body should be independent, foresee pluralist representation of the social forces involved in the protection and promotion of human rights, and rely on adequate funding. Italy recently committed to establish such an institution in the context of its candidacy and election to the UN Human Rights Council in May 2011. Amnesty International expects the Italian authorities to implement this pledge as a matter of urgency, and to engage widely with civil society in so doing.

Following the number of reports of human rights violations committed by law enforcement officers and other officials in the context of the Genoa G8 demonstrations, over the years Amnesty International has also called on the Italian authorities to conduct a thorough review of current policing practices, including the training and deployment of law enforcement officials

in crowd control and the regulations on the use of force and firearms by law enforcement officials. Amnesty International has recommended in particular that Italy ensures its officers are adequately equipped and trained to employ non-violent means before resorting, only where strictly necessary, to the use of force or firearms; are trained and equipped to use non-lethal methods of crowd control; are subject to strict regulations regarding the use of such methods and are tied to a strict system of accountability. Moreover, in order to be accountable, officers should be obliged to display some forms of individual identification during operations. However, no action has been taken by relevant authorities in this regard.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Genoa G8 summit Amnesty International calls on the Italian authorities to:

- publicly condemn the human rights violations carried out by law enforcement officers and medical personnel 10 years ago, and apologise to the victims;
- commit to ensure that violations such as those occurred during the 2001 Genoa G8 summit do not happen again and take concrete steps to ensure accountability for all human rights violations committed by law enforcement forces;
- incorporate into domestic law the crime of torture and adopt a definition of torture that covers all the elements contained in article 1 of the UN Convention against Torture;
- establish a National Human Rights Institution consistent with the “Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions (the Paris Principles)”;
- ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and establish an independent National Preventive Mechanism for the prevention of torture and ill-treatment at the domestic level;
- conduct a thorough review of current policing practices, including the training and deployment of law enforcement officials in crowd control, the regulations on the use of force and firearms by law enforcement officials, and the display of individual identification by all law enforcement officers during operations.

End/