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## **Jamaica urged to bring to justice those guilty of gang operation killings**

The Jamaican authorities must bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations, including the killing of 74 people in Kingston during a state of emergency imposed one year ago in an operation to arrest a suspected gang leader, Amnesty International today said in a new report.

Despite some positive steps, the authorities have failed to prosecute anyone for the killings during the operation to arrest Christopher Coke, who was eventually deported to the USA to face drug and arms-trafficking charges.

“An independent commission of inquiry must be established in order to ensure that all human rights violations committed in Tivoli last year do not go unpunished like so many others in Jamaica,” said Chiara Liguori Amnesty International’s expert on Jamaica.

On 24 May 2010, Jamaican police and military initiated a joint operation in the West Kingston community of Tivoli Gardens, to arrest Christopher Coke and re-establish order in the community.

During the two days operation at least 74 people, including a member of the Jamaica Defence Force, were killed and at least 54 people, including 28 members of the security forces, injured.

In the two-month state of emergency that followed, more than 4,000 people, including children, were detained, most without charge. Two people reportedly taken into custody remain unaccounted for.

The investigations initiated by the authorities around the killings have not established facts and responsibilities yet. According to information gathered by Amnesty International’s legal experts, investigations have suffered shortcomings in the initial phase which might have compromised the results.

Shortcomings in the initial phase of the investigation include the lack of protection of crime scenes and the failure to remove from service the firearms used during the confrontations for ballistic testing.

In addition, the organization documented a general lack of resources for the investigations, particularly in the Legal Medicine Unit of the Ministry of National Security, where only two forensic pathologists work.

“The lack of effective investigations for human rights crimes is nothing new in Jamaica,” said Chiara Liguori. “The reality is that for far too long, inner-city communities have been trapped between drug gangs and a state that ignores them.”

Amnesty International has issued over 50 recommendations to the Jamaican authorities and is supporting local calls for a full commission of inquiry into the human rights violations committed during the state of emergency.