

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Jamaica: Janice Allen case demonstrates lack of political will to end police killings**

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Jamaican authorities continue to lack the political will required to end extrajudicial killings by police, said Amnesty International after the collapse yesterday of the trial of the police officer charged with the murder of 13-year-old Janice Allen.

The organization announced that it will assist the family and Jamaican human rights organizations in taking the case to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

"Jamaica has one of the world's highest rates of police killings. Yet not one police officer has been held accountable through the courts. Whether through unwillingness or sheer incompetence, yesterday's events suggest that this culture of impunity will continue," Amnesty International stated.

Four years after Janice Allen was shot and killed in Trenchtown in April 2000, the case collapsed yesterday after the state failed to present any evidence against the accused. The trial lasted an hour from start to finish, ending when the judge instructed the jury to return formal not guilty verdicts.

"The investigation of Janice Allen's death has been marred by witness intimidation, official incompetence and delay" Amnesty International said.

At the opening of the trial, the prosecution revealed that three crucial pieces of evidence were unavailable.

A Firearms Register recording the issuing of the gun to the accused police officer was reported lost following a fire in Denham Town Police Station. Crucial eyewitness evidence was ruled inadmissible because of the failure to hold a formal identification parade. The investigating officer who took the statement from the accused police officer was unavailable to testify.

Amnesty International has been unable to confirm reports that the investigating officer's life was threatened. However the organization remains concerned by a pattern of police intimidation of other crucial witnesses in the case, including the victim's sister.

"As a member of the Organisation of American States, and a party to the Inter-American Convention on Human Rights, Jamaica is required by law to ensure that all deaths at the hands of police officers are investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially, with those found guilty held to account" Amnesty International concluded.

### **Background Information**

During 2003, Jamaican police killed 114 people, in a country whose population is over 2.6 million. Despite several recent inquest findings of police liability, trials of police officers accused of committing unlawful killings are virtually unheard of.

Janice Allen was killed on 14th April 2000 in front of her sister and other witnesses. Their accounts were consistent with an autopsy report suggesting that a police officer shot at Janice directly. The Preliminary Inquiry (a procedure used to decide whether or not there is a prima facie case against the accused before proceeding with the prosecution) into the case lasted a year and a half.

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