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Papua New Guinea: Amnesty International welcomes closure of Manus Island refugee detention facility and urges increased protection of women and girls from discrimination and violence

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

Ratification of core human rights treaties, and passing national legislation to give meaning to these obligations, is essential for the enjoyment of human rights in Papua New Guinea. However, their implementation by the government of Papua New Guinea, in policy and practice, remains a significant barrier to the full realization of human rights in the country.

Amnesty International welcomes Papua New Guinea's acceptance of recommendations to implement the Family Protection Act.¹ The organization is concerned, however, that despite passing the Act in 2013 and the *Lukautim Pikinini* (Child Protection) Act in 2014, little has been done to implement this legislation and to address the substantial levels of gender-based violence and gender inequality faced by women and girls in the country.²

Sex workers,³ women-headed households, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons and women with disabilities face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and are particularly at risk of human rights abuses. Amnesty International calls on Papua New Guinea to address all cultural practices that discriminate against women and girls and to implement laws to protect women and children from violence.

Amnesty International is encouraged to note that Papua New Guinea accepted recommendations to end excessive use of force by both state and private security officials and to hold the perpetrators to account.⁴ Police abuses, such as torture and other ill-treatment and the unlawful use of force and firearms, continue to occur and the accountability mechanisms are weak.

In May 2016, Amnesty International documented serious abuses against women who sell sex, including rape and physical assault in custody and degrading treatment by police officers.⁵

¹ Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Papua New Guinea*, 13 July 2016, A/HRC/33/10, recommendations 104.99 (Australia), 104.100 (Switzerland), 104.101 (Republic of Korea), 104.102 (Japan), 104.107 (Norway), 104.108 (Thailand), 104.112 (Ghana), 104.116 (Fiji), 104.117 (Germany), 104.132 (Sweden), 104.133 (Canada).

² Human Rights Watch, *Universal Periodic Review Submission to Papua New Guinea 2016*, May 2016. See: http://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/document/papua_new_guinea/session_25_-_may_2016/hrw_upr25_png_e_main.pdf

³ Amnesty International, *Outlawed and Abused: Criminalizing sex work in Papua New Guinea* (Index: ASA 34/4030/2016).

⁴ A/HRC/33/10, recommendations 104.128 (Germany), 104.129 (Republic of Korea), 104.130 (Sierra Leone), 104.131 (Switzerland), 104.135 (Jamaica), 104.136 (New Zealand), 104.138 (Malaysia).

⁵ See: Amnesty International, *Outlawed and abused: Criminalizing sex work in Papua New Guinea* (Index: ASA 34/4030/2016); Amnesty International, *Out of the Shadows: Fighting for the Rights of Sex Workers*, 26 May 2016. See: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/05/out-of-the-shadows-fighting-for-the-rights-of-sex-workers/> accessed 31 August 2016; Amnesty International, *Time for Papua New Guinea to End*

In June 2016, the police opened fire on students from the University of Papua New Guinea protesting against corruption in the capital, Port Moresby, leaving eight young people seriously injured and a further 38 requiring medical treatment.⁶ Three separate inquiries have been announced into this incident, however, it remains to be seen if these inquiries will be impartial and effective. Those responsible for the shooting of unarmed students, including officials who gave the order to shoot, should promptly be identified, charged and prosecuted in a fair trial process.

Finally, Amnesty International welcomes the announcement that the government will close the Manus Island refugee detention facility, after the Supreme Court declared it unlawful in April 2016.⁷ Amnesty International urges the authorities to end such detention immediately and to return the asylum seekers and refugees to Australia.⁸

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Papua New Guinea on 22 September 2016 during its 33rd 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: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa34/3540/2016/en/>

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Abuses against Sex Workers, 2 June 2016. See: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/06/time-for-papua-new-guinea-to-end-abuses-against-sex-workers/> accessed 31 August 2016.

⁶ Amnesty International, *Papua New Guinea: Disgraceful shootings of students*, 8 June 2016. See: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/06/papua-new-guinea-disgraceful-shootings-of-students/> accessed 31 August 2016.

⁷ The Guardian, *Papua New Guinea court rules detention of asylum seekers on Manus Island illegal*, 26 April 2016. See: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/apr/26/papua-new-guinea-court-rules-detention-asylum-seekers-manus-unconstitutional> accessed 31 August 2016.

⁸ A/HRC/33/10, recommendations 104.159 (Mexico), 140.161 (Sweden).