

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS UPON CHIEFS OF POLICE IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA TO EFFECTIVELY INCORPORATE HUMAN RIGHTS
INTO SARPCCO-INITIATED TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR POLICE OFFICERS**

PUBLIC
03/01/98

AI Index: AFR

June 1998

Amnesty International has written to the police authorities in Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe to urge them to put human rights training on their agenda when they meet in Gaborone, Botswana, in late July 1998, and to make human rights a central element in the further development of a regional, standardized police training program.

Chiefs of police from across the sub-region will be meeting in late July in the context of the Southern Africa Regional Police Chiefs' Cooperation Organization (SARPCCO). SARPCCO was formed some three years ago with the support of police authorities in Southern African countries, and subsequently established a Training Sub-Committee. The Training Sub-Committee's pilot training projects appear now to include human rights topics.

Amnesty International welcomes this as a potentially important and useful development in creating a Southern African concept of police which respects human rights. Through such a process, it is possible that police agencies across Southern Africa could secure greater support and cooperation from the communities they serve. Amnesty International believes, too, that with a stronger emphasis on accountability in the performance of a police officer's duties, policing should become more efficient and effective in combatting crime.

Amnesty International therefore urged Southern African police chiefs to address three basic areas of policing that have an impact on human rights, and to put them into any SARPCCO-initiated training program:

1. The use of force and firearms

Amnesty International recommended that any training program dealing with public order policing in the control of crowds or with the arrest of criminal suspects should emphasize that lethal force should only be used when strictly unavoidable as a last resort to protect life. Police and security forces should as far as possible use non-violent means in carrying out their duty; use force in proportion to the seriousness of the offence and the legitimate objective to be achieved; and -- to that end -- receive training on proper use of force and firearms to meet international standards regarding the use of force.

2. The interrogation of criminal suspects

In a possible training programme on "scene of crime management" and the investigation of alleged crimes, including techniques of interviewing suspects and witnesses, Amnesty

International recommended that such training be designed to build the capacity of law enforcement officers and the police to gather and corroborate evidence in an efficient manner that avoids reliance upon coercion. Training programs should stress the need to respect the right to life of those being interviewed and their right not to be subjected to torture or ill-treatment.

3. Effective management within the police

In all training programs, Amnesty International recommended that it is important to expose police management trainees to those procedures that exist in some of the region's police services to punish violations regarding human rights. When breaches of discipline occur, proper human rights training for police managers and supervising officers should emphasize that all officers should fully cooperate with both the internal complaints authority of a police service and any existing independent authority that oversees policing activities and policy.

Evaluating the training program is also very important. When carrying out training for police officers, the criteria for the evaluation of the success of a training program -- including the evaluation of trainees' understanding of and commitment to human rights standards -- should be established at the start of the training program to ensure that lessons are learned from previous training experience and that those lessons get incorporated into future training initiatives.

Amnesty International suggested some possible "basic performance indicators" of police behaviour that could be developed as yardsticks to measure the effectiveness of police training in promoting respect for human rights:

- Are human rights topics included in the permanent police training curricula?
- Are role-plays developed of actual situations in which trainee police officers must take difficult decisions in stressful circumstances regarding the proportionate use of force?
- Do fatal shootings by police get investigated promptly and thoroughly?
- Have police guidelines on controlling crowds been reviewed to bring them into conformity with international human rights standards?
- Do police authorities monitor citizens' complaints on a provincial or district basis, in order to identify possible "problem" police stations?
- Do police authorities use "a demonstrated respect for human rights" when assessing an individual police officer's job performance when s/he comes up for promotion?

Amnesty International welcomed the fact that SARPCCO has already initiated "a fruitful exchange of ideas at the regional and inter-regional levels", as the United Nations suggested in its Guidelines for the Effective Implementation of the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials.

In a section of the Guidelines, the UN called upon governments to "organize symposia on the role and functions of law enforcement officials in the protection of human rights and the prevention of crime." Amnesty International suggested that SARPCCO hold such a symposium at the regional level, followed by national symposia. It would be a fitting achievement to carry out these and other recommendations of the Guidelines by 17 December 1999, which is the 10th anniversary of the UN's formal adoption of the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials.