

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Extrajudicial Executions

11 September 1990

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The 17 above-named people are reported to have been arrested by military police on 16 August 1990 in Berbera, the main port in the north, and extrajudicially executed soon afterwards, in public, outside a restaurant on a main street of the town, at about 10pm that night.

At least three local employees of international humanitarian aid organizations working in the north were involved. The executions are said to have been carried out in reprisal for activities of the opposition Somali National Movement (SNM). SNM fighters are said to have captured a government boat and also destroyed a fuel truck. The 17 were members of the Issaq clan, from which the SNM draws most of its support and which is the dominant clan in the town. The victims were all civilians, apparently arrested arbitrarily.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Similar atrocities against innocent civilians have been carried out on several previous occasions in different parts of the country in recent years by the military police, known as "Hangash" or "red berets", and by army personnel. Several hundreds of people were arrested and executed extrajudicially in Berbera in June 1988 after a major SNM attack on Hargeisa and other northern towns, and 46 Issaq clan members were rounded up in Mogadishu, the capital, on 16 July 1989 and extrajudicially executed on a beach at Jezira, 50 kilometres away. In each case the executions took place without any form of trial. An inquiry was set up into the Jezira massacre but its findings have never been released and no action has been taken. No case is known to Amnesty International of any member of the security forces being punished or prosecuted for crimes of this kind, which have evidently been carried out with the knowledge of high military authorities and condoned by the government.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telexes/telegrams/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at reports of the public extrajudicial execution by military police personnel of 17 people in Berbera on 16 August (citing some of the names above);
- calling for an independent inquiry to be established to investigate the incident, report its findings publicly, and make recommendations on actions to be taken against those responsible;

- urging the authorities to condemn the killings and publicly state that crimes such as the arbitrary extrajudicial executions of civilians and prisoners by the army will be severely punished in all cases.

