

## **Public Statement**

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### **Uganda: Soldiers' executions must not set trend**

*Amnesty International condemns the recent execution of two Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) soldiers on Monday, 25 March, without recourse to a fair and independent trial as well as the use of the death penalty as a form of punishment by the Ugandan army.*

*The international human rights organization is further alarmed by reports that indicate that the Ugandan army could be considering this extreme type of measures to discipline soldiers. The army is currently involved in a process of disarmament of the Karimijong in eastern Uganda due to insecurity in the region.*

*"The speed of the executions of these two men cast a long shadow of doubt on the manner in which military courts are conducted and the way their decisions are reached," the organisation said today as information of these executions became public. "It was reported that the court martial lasted for two hours and 36 minutes. This only compounds the fact that there could not have been an effective investigation to determine the guilt or otherwise of these two men."*

*The timing between the arrest of the men and their execution brings into question the due process of law. Any court martial should be conducted under stringent standards of transparency, fair trial and impartiality.*

*"These men could have been made scapegoats to give the impression to the international community that the army deals swiftly and effectively with those who have committed crimes. However, any standards that do not conform to the due process of law can only reflect*

*both to the international community and Ugandans themselves that the army is unwilling to hold themselves accountable to these standards," Amnesty International said.*

*"The failure of this case to be investigated fully before any trial was conducted leads us to believe that these men were not given the opportunity to fully engage in the process, thus denying their chance for a fair and independent trial."*

### **Background**

*Two UPDF soldiers, Cpl James Omedio and Pte Abdullah Muhammad, attached to the "B" company of the UPDF's 67th Battalion were executed by firing squad for reportedly killing the Rev. Fr. Declan O'Toole, his driver, Patrick Longoli, and his cook, Fidel Longole while held at a roadblock three kilometres from the UPDF's barracks at Kalosarich situated in Karamoja, eastern Uganda on 21 March 2002. It was also reported that Pte Abdullah Muhammad had to be shot in the head at close range after a medical officer established that his heart was still beating. Both men were killed by a firing squad in public.*

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>

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