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Madagascar: Amnesty International urges release of political prisoners, investigation into excessive use of force against demonstrators and freedom of the media

United Nations Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Madagascar

Amnesty International shares serious concerns expressed by several States about the excessive, sometimes lethal, use of force by the security forces, as well as arbitrary arrests and detention in the context of the current political crisis and about political interference in the administration of justice resulting in a lack of independent investigations into such violations. Defendants have been denied the right to be brought promptly before a judge or to be tried within a reasonable time. Others have been denied the right to defence, or their lawyers have been harassed and intimidated.

Amnesty International welcomes Madagascar's support of a recommendation to release political detainees, cease arbitrary detention and ensure that those arrested and detained are given a fair trial. Amnesty International urges the government to ensure its prompt implementation. It is essential that Madagascar support and give effect to the important recommendations to open an independent inquiry into the deaths and the excessive use of force during the, often peaceful, demonstrations in 2009. Madagascar must ensure that those responsible for unlawful killings and other human rights violations are brought to justice in accordance with international standards for fair trial and victims and their families granted reparation, including fair and adequate compensation. Amnesty International also calls on the government to immediately disband the bodies set up by the High Transitional Authority (HAT) and mandated to carry out arrests, detentions and the investigation of crimes, as recommended during the review.

Journalists and media outlets have been targeted by the authorities; both under President Ravalomanana and after the HAT came to power in March 2009. Journalists deemed too critical of those in power have been silenced. Amnesty International calls on Madagascar to swiftly implement recommendations to guarantee freedom of expression and assembly and an independent media and to ensure that no one is arrested for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

Although Madagascar has imposed a *de facto* moratorium on executions, it has not yet abolished the death penalty in law or ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aiming at the abolition of the death penalty. Amnesty International calls on Madagascar to introduce a *de jure* moratorium on executions and to abolish the death penalty.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Madagascar on 10 June 2010 during its 14th session. Prior to the adoption of the report of the review Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

Public Document

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