

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Italy: Reports of police ill-treatment at Rome football match must be investigated

Amnesty International is concerned that law enforcement officers used excessive force to break up a potentially violent clash between Roma and Manchester United supporters during yesterday's football match at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome.

Images and witness statements in the international media today and yesterday suggest that Italian police officers heavily beat football supporters with batons as they moved in to prevent clashes provoked by what the media have claimed was a 'small minority' of fans. The organisation is particularly concerned by reports that police officers hit individuals who were not involved in the violence.

Eyewitnesses of the events have stated to Amnesty International that police officers repeatedly hit persons who were lying on the ground. He described some officers' actions as being 'over the top' and making 'the problem worse'. According to British Embassy figures, 13 people have been hospitalized although it is not clear how many of these are victims of the force used by the police.

Amnesty International is concerned that some of the law enforcement officers present acted disproportionately and applied force indiscriminately. The organisation is particularly concerned about a statement made today by Achille Serra, the *Prefetto* of Rome and responsible for the Rome police, that the force used was "justified" and that there is currently "no plan for an inquiry" unless evidence is provided to demonstrate that such an inquiry is necessary. The organisation considers that there is enough evidence to warrant an inquiry and notes the statement made today by the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) that they will conduct an investigation into the events. Amnesty International urges the Italian authorities to fully cooperate with any inquiry and to conduct its own prompt and impartial investigations into all allegations of excessive use of force by law enforcement officers.

The organization urges the Italian authorities to conduct a thorough review of current policing practices to ensure that Italy is abiding by international law and standards on the use of force by law enforcement officers.

Italy must ensure that its officers are adequately equipped and trained to employ non-violent means before resorting, where strictly necessary, to the use of force and firearms; are trained and equipped to use non-lethal methods of crowd control; are subject to strict regulations regarding the use of such methods and are tied to a strict system of accountability.

Furthermore, Italy must take urgent steps towards the eradication of impunity among law enforcement officers for human rights violations by ensuring that officers display some forms of individual identification during operations and ensuring that all investigations into allegations of excessive use of force by law enforcement agencies are investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially.

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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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