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RWANDA: MIXED REACTION TO PUBLICATION OF KIBEHO KILLINGS INQUIRY

Amnesty International expressed disappointment at the report of the international commission of inquiry into last month's killings at Rwanda's Kibeho camp but welcomed that an inquiry was held and that the results were published.

The human rights organization expressed its apprehension that the 13-page report failed to satisfy the strict international standards for such inquiries and that it also failed to make adequate recommendations to prevent further human rights violations in Rwanda.

The report of the international commission of inquiry includes the conclusion that soldiers of the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) and armed extremists among the internally displaced persons in Kibeho camps had both been responsible for arbitrary deprivation of life and serious bodily harm against unarmed civilians.

The publication on 18 May of the report of the international commission of inquiry into the killings on 22 April represents only a first step towards establishing the true circumstances surrounding these events. This initiative sets an important precedent in investigating incidents of human rights violations in Rwanda.

However, the organization was concerned that the report of the inquiry did not give full details of the evidence upon which it was based and did not meet the international standards set forth in the United Nations Principles in the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions.

Amnesty International also regrets that the commission of inquiry's mandate did not enable it to explore in more detail persistent reports of army trucks secretly taking bodies away from the site of the camp and burying them in other locations. Their report notes that bodies related to the Kibeho incident had been buried outside the camp but it was not possible to determine the exact number of fatalities.

Amnesty International hopes that the limited recommendations of the commission of inquiry will be promptly implemented by the relevant authorities. In particular, the organization is appealing again to the Rwandese Government to identify all those responsible for the killings which occurred in Kibeho and promptly bring them to justice in accordance with international standards, and without recourse to the death penalty.

It is disappointing that the recommendations of the international commission of inquiry do not include more specific measures to prevent further extrajudicial executions in Rwanda. While the tragic events at Kibeho may represent the single largest incident of mass killings in recent weeks and have attracted significant international attention, other deliberate and arbitrary killings in different parts of the country continue to be of concern to Amnesty International.

The Rwandese authorities have a duty to investigate all reports of human rights violations and to prevent a further escalation of abuses, whether by their own troops or by militia and other armed groups. Amnesty International has been appealing and continues to appeal to the international community to assist the Rwandese authorities in the task of bringing people to justice and rebuilding the judicial system in Rwanda.

Amnesty International is also awaiting the findings of a separate inquiry into the events in Kibeho being conducted on the national level by the Rwandese Ministry of Defence.

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