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KENYA: NEW EVIDENCE OF TORTURE AND DENIAL OF MEDICAL CARE

Amnesty International today released a new report and video footage that provides shocking evidence of torture, deaths, ill-treatment and the denial of medical care to prisoners in Kenya.

"Investigations into allegations of torture by the police are rare -- prosecutions still more rare -- and many police officers routinely torture detainees with impunity," Amnesty International said in its 31-page report.

Criminal suspects are systematically tortured to extract confessions, as are some political prisoners, or alleged activists, often from ethnic groups perceived as supporting the opposition parties, according to the report, *Kenya: Torture, Compounded by the Denial of Medical Care*.

The report, based in part upon a medical research trip earlier this year to Kenya, also documents how many prisoners are refused medical treatment or receive it very late, after delaying tactics by Kenyan authorities.

"Well-known political prisoners are ill-treated and tortured," Amnesty International said. "For every high-profile case of torture, however, there are scores of lesser known victims across Kenya who are tortured, sometimes to the point of permanent disability or even death."

Most political prisoners report that they were tortured by officers of the "Special Branch" officially known as the Directorate of Security Intelligence (DSI), or by officers of the police Criminal Intelligence Department (CID). Amnesty International has received a number of reports of refugees from Uganda, Somalia and Rwanda being harassed, ill-treated and tortured by Kenyan security forces.

Amnesty International researchers gathered first-hand accounts of the methods of torture employed by the Kenyan police, which usually include beatings with sticks, fists, handles of hoes and gun butts. Simultaneous blows to both ears cause extreme pain and can rupture the ear drums, while some political detainees have had their fingernails and toenails pulled out. Both men and women have been subjected to violent forms of sexual humiliation.

Compounding the injuries of torture, Kenyan law enforcement authorities frequently refuse to take torture victims to hospital or block private doctors from seeing prisoners in need of medical care. Officers in charge of prisons often insist on court orders, which can take up to a week to obtain, before allowing a doctor to examine a torture victim. Prison conditions are harsh, with severe overcrowding, unsanitary conditions and a lack of food and clothing.

Private doctors who try to treat prisoners are also harassed and threatened by police, and many doctors who attempt to write medical reports on torture cases intimidated into silence. One doctor has even been imprisoned for writing medical reports about political prisoners.

"Not only is it outrageous that prisoners are tortured in Kenya, but this outrage is compounded when the Kenyan authorities deny doctors their right to treat the victims who desperately need medical help," Amnesty International said.

In a particularly graphic example of torture and denial of medical care, Amnesty International interviewed and filmed two young men who have become permanently disabled after DSI officers tied them to trees in a forest, beat them, then left them in jail for six days without treatment for their injuries.

The Amnesty International video release shows the investigation team of doctors examining Geoffrey Ndungu Gichuki, one of a group of 67 men arrested a year ago on Kenya's Independence Day on suspicion of holding an illegal meeting. He developed gangrene after being tied to a tree and beaten; later, his arm had to be amputated.

This year, more than 40 people have been arrested on suspicion of membership of an illegal guerilla movement called the *February Eighteenth Movement*. Many of those detained were reportedly tortured. On 22 September, Wang'ondy Kariuki, a lawyer and former prisoner of conscience, was arrested and held incommunicado for seven days before being brought to court. He was stripped naked, repeatedly beaten and, for the first three days, denied food.

Female political prisoners and women accused of common crimes have also been tortured and sexually abused. Alice Mariga Ashioya was reportedly tortured by a woman police officer who forced a bottle containing pepper into her vagina. Josephine Nyawira Ngengi, a prisoner of conscience, stated that during her detention, she was beaten and blunt objects were forced into her vagina until she bled. Another detainee, Rosemary Nyambura, died in custody as a result of torture.

In its report, Amnesty International makes 13 recommendations to the Kenyan Government on how to stop the widespread practice of torture by police. One of the main solutions to the problem will be to break the cycle of impunity by investigating and prosecuting perpetrators of torture and by compensating victims, according to the human rights organization.

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