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Mozambique: Deaths of 80 people in custody must be investigated by independent experts

Amnesty International is calling on the government of Mozambique to ensure that the investigation into the recent deaths in custody of least 80 people in Montepuez, is independent and thorough, and carried out by qualified experts.

Although the authorities have said the bodies showed no signs of violence, the deaths on the night of 21-22 November occurred in suspicious circumstances.

The Mozambican authorities have reportedly sent a team of doctors and police officers to investigate these deaths and have also requested the assistance of foreign experts.

The deceased were arrested during or after demonstrations organized by the opposition party, Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO -- Mozambican National Resistance). The demonstrators were protesting the results of elections held in December 1999, in which the ruling party (FRELIMO) won the majority of seats.

At least 41 people died in clashes with the police on 9 November in the context of the nationwide demonstrations. Scores were wounded and hundreds were arrested.

The most serious incidents occurred in Montepuez in the north of Cabo Delgado province, where over 20 people were killed and over 100 arrested. Many of those who died at Montepuez were members of RENAMO.

The government should investigate the incidents of 9 November as well as the deaths in custody. The inquiries must be independent and impartial; the reports of the inquiries must be made public and those suspected of responsibility for the death should be brought to justice.

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