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ZAÏRE: NINE DEMONSTRATORS KILLED

Following the killing of at least nine protestors in Zaïre at the weekend -- when security forces violently broke up a demonstration -- Amnesty International is calling on the government to prevent soldiers using force or firearms against peaceful protesters.

In addition to those who died, 23 others were injured on Saturday 29 July 1995 when the security forces in Kinshasa apparently used firearms to disperse a reportedly peaceful opposition demonstration organized by the *Parti Lumumbiste Unifié* (PALU), Lumumbist Unified Party. The demonstrators were protesting against a two-year postponement of elections which were scheduled for July 1995.

Amnesty International fears further violence and bloodshed could occur in the next few days. Members of the opposition coalition, the *Union Sacrée de l'opposition radicale et alliés* (USORAS), Sacred Union of the Radical Opposition and Allies, have pledged to hold a series of demonstrations protesting against the delay in Zaïre's political transition process.

Amnesty International strongly urges the Government of Zaïre to issue strict orders to the security forces not to use force and firearms when policing peaceful political demonstrations.

The human rights organization is also concerned for the physical safety of the PALU leader, Antoine Gizenga, who was arrested, together with his wife, by members of the security forces and apparently suspected of organizing the demonstration. It is reported that they are currently held at Kinshasa's Makala Prison. Torture and ill-treatment of political prisoners is common in Zaïre.

Amnesty International is calling for an immediate and impartial inquiry to be held into the killings of demonstrators. It is also calling for Antoine Gizenga and his wife to be well-treated while in custody. They should either be charged with a recognizable criminal offence and be fairly and promptly tried or else released.

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