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Jamaica: Justice under international spotlight -- Amnesty International sends observer to Braeton inquest

Amnesty International today announced that it will send an observer to the inquest into the Braeton massacre that left seven youths dead -- including a 15 year old -- on 14 March 2001.

"Today the eyes of the world are on Jamaica," the organization said, adding that, "The need for inquest proceedings to be conducted with the utmost integrity is absolutely paramount."

Six out of the seven victims received shots to the head and at least one appeared to have been shot at close range. Neighbours allegedly heard the youths being forced to beg for their lives before they were shot by members of the Crime Management Unit of the Jamaican police.

"The killing of these seven young men by the police shocked Jamaica and the international community, but it was just one example of a pattern of police brutality which has resulted in a tally of over 3,200 deaths of Jamaicans at the hands of the security forces over the last twenty years," Amnesty International stressed.

Amnesty International also responded to what appear to be inaccurate or misleading media reports about the qualifications of the forensic pathologist who observed the autopsies of the seven youths on behalf of the organisation and who gave evidence before the inquest this week, Dr. Peter Leth MD PhD.

A doctor of Medicine and Surgery (University of Copenhagen, Denmark) since 1983, with an American diploma in medicine and

surgery (e.c.f.m.g. 1983), Dr. Leth graduated as a pathologist in 1993 and is currently Deputy Chief Forensic Pathologist and Assistant Professor at the Department of Forensic Medicine, University of Aarhus, Denmark. He has worked for the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, exhuming bodies from mass graves in Kosovo and performing many autopsies on people who had been killed by gun shots. Moreover he has worked in Greenland and Denmark.

Amnesty International will be represented by Ivor Frank, during the week commencing 18 February 2002, at the inquest into the deaths of Christopher Grant, Reagon Beckford, Curtis Smith, Andre Virgo, Dane Renaldo Whyte, Lancebert Clarke and Tamoya Wilson before the Coroner's Court, St. Catherine, Jamaica. This will be the first in a series of observations of the inquest proceedings.

Amnesty International has produced a five minutes video on the Braeton massacre that can be viewed at: http://emedia.amnesty.org/Braeton_7.ram

Background

Ivor Frank has been a member of the Bar of England and Wales for 23 years and is a member of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales. He has prosecuted and defended many criminal cases and is also an experienced advocate in the civil courts. He has also worked in the United States of America and Canada.

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