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Jamaica: Four more killings bear hallmarks of police extrajudicial executions

Amnesty International is gravely concerned that four more killings by the Jamaican Crime Management Unit (CMU) bear the hall mark of extrajudicial executions. The CMU have been implicated in numerous allegations of human rights violations since its formation in September 2000.

"Again we see the Crime Management Unit kill in disputed circumstances. How long will this police unit be allowed to leave a swathe of death across Jamaica before the authorities take adequate action to ensure police accountability," Piers Bannister, researcher on the English-speaking Caribbean at the International Secretariat of Amnesty International asked today.

On the evening of 7 May 2003, members of the CMU killed two men and two women in Crawl District, Clarendon. The police claimed to have come under fire and that after returning fire, "four persons were found in the house seriously injured." The four were pronounced dead upon arrival at hospital.

"This case bears all the hallmarks of extrajudicial executions. The police version of events is vehemently disputed by the local residents, many of whom claim to have witnessed police murder. None of the victims survived, not even as far as the hospital. No police officers were hurt, despite claiming to have come under heavy gun fire when in the area," Amnesty International said.

According to media reports, the 8-year-old daughter of one of the women killed was ordered from the room before the police fatally shot her mother.

The recent incident is remarkably similar to the killing of seven young men by the CMU in Braeton in March 2001. In that case, the Director of Public Prosecutions has yet to make a decision as to whether to charge the officers involved, despite overwhelming evidence the young men were extrajudicially executed.

"The authorities should ensure these four killings are appropriately resolved in a timely manner," Piers Bannister urged.

Amnesty International has documented numerous cases of inadequate investigation into suspected unlawful killings by members of the Jamaican Constabulary Force over the past three years.

"The investigation into the killing of these four people must be comprehensive, swift and thorough, and conform to international laws and standards governing the investigation of suspected unlawful killings by state agents. The police officers involved must immediately be suspended from their policing duties, pending the completion of investigations. Any officer implicated in acting unlawfully must be charged and tried promptly and fairly. Police immunity for killings must end in Jamaica," Piers Bannister concluded.

Background

Three of the victims have been named in the media as Lewena Thompson, aged 39, Angela Richards, aged 45, and Kirk Gordon. The fourth has yet to be identified.

Jamaica suffers from an appallingly high level of police killings. In 2002, the police killed 133 people in a population of only 2.6 million. While some of the killings are the result of the legitimate use of lethal force, there is strong evidence that many amounted to extrajudicial executions.

However, the prosecution of police officers on charges relating to unlawful killings is almost unheard of. Despite numerous assurances from the Government and the Director of Public Prosecutions that there is no immunity for police officers implicated in unlawful killings, the authorities have failed to provide any details of officers actually tried, let alone convicted. The last conviction of unlawful killing by a police officer known to Amnesty International was in 1999.

For further information on the situation in Jamaica and details of the killing of Patrick Genius please see [Jamaica: Killings and violence by police: How many more victims? AMR 38/003/2001](#) and [Jamaica: The killing of the Braeton Seven - A justice system on trial, AMR 38/005/2003](#)

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