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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -- 10 JULY 1996

USA: NEW YORK POLICE SHOOTING HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR INQUIRY

NEW YORK -- This week's police shooting of African American Nathaniel Gaines Jr. gives new urgency to Amnesty International's calls for an independent inquiry into lethal force, deaths in custody and police brutality in New York City.

"When we launched our report on police brutality in New York last week, many said it was old news and official reaction was dismissive," Amnesty International said.

"It's appalling that one more person has had to be gunned down to make officials stand up and take notice."

Initial reports have stated that Nathaniel Gaines Jr. was running away from police when he was shot and was not involved in any serious crime.

"If these reports are accurate, this case fits the pattern we highlighted in our extensive report. In the 30 cases we reviewed we found that the majority of victims were unarmed, not criminal suspects, and from ethnic minorities," Amnesty International said.

The organization said there have been a spate of police shootings of ethnic minorities in 1996 alone, including an unarmed 15-year-old Puerto Rican boy shot dead in the back of a car and an unarmed African American man shot 18 times while sitting in his parked car last month.

Amnesty International is calling on the New York state authorities to carry out an independent investigation into the shooting of Nathaniel Gaines Jr. and an independent inquiry into police brutality, deaths in custody and police shootings.

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