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Kenya: Man shot dead by police in Nairobi forced eviction protests

Amnesty International has urged the Kenyan authorities to investigate the death of a market trader reportedly shot dead by police during a protest against forced evictions in a Nairobi settlement.

Jackson Maina Kihato, 74, was killed on Monday after he tried to complain about the police beating a woman during demonstrations in Kabete NITD. Protests have continued in the settlement since an estimated 1,000 people lost their homes and market stalls in a mass forced eviction on 10 July.

"A man who last week lost his home and livelihood in a forced eviction has now been shot dead for trying to defend a fellow resident from police violence," said Justus Nyang'aya, Amnesty International's Kenya director.

"The person found to be responsible for this shocking and apparently unprovoked attack must be brought to justice immediately."

Participants in Monday's protest - mainly women market traders who lost their stalls and homes in last week's demolition - had blocked the road next to the flattened eviction site in order to demonstrate.

Police arrived and tried to disperse the protesters with tear gas. When that failed, they began beating the demonstrators with batons.

During the protests, Jackson Maina Kihato approached a police officer to complain about the beating of a woman by another policeman. The police officer then reportedly shot the 74-year-old in the chest from close range.

Jackson Maina Kihato and his wife were both traders in Kabete NITD before it was demolished.

"Victims of the forced evictions in Kabete NITD must be given humanitarian assistance and compensated for their losses," said Justus Nyang'aya.

"The force used by the Kenyan police to disperse the unarmed protesters was excessive and unacceptable."

Bulldozers from the Nairobi City Council demolished around 100 homes and 470 market stalls in Kabete NITD on 10 July without giving any official notice to residents.

Angry residents reportedly clashed with armed police in the following days as tensions flared in the settlement.

The evictions have left hundreds of people, mainly women and children, without shelter. Many are sleeping outdoors without blankets or warm clothes, or money to buy food or other essential items. Residents believe that another part of the settlement is also at risk of being demolished.

Kabete NITD (Native Industrial Training Department) was established in 1974 by workers constructing a road. The land is owned by the Veterinary Department of the government of Kenya, although there have been other claims of ownership and repeated threats of forced eviction.

In May 2010, market traders operating from the road reserve in Kangemi were relocated by the provincial administration to unused land in Kabete NITD. The relocation took place after months of consultation and negotiation and was peacefully carried out.

By contrast, the forced evictions from Kabete NITD have been carried out without any such safeguards and completely disregard the relocation plan that had earlier been agreed with the communities.