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MEDIA ADVISORY

KENYA

Government must act now to stop spiral of violence

Amnesty International today is launching a report on the killings in early 1998 in Rift Valley Province, Kenya, in which more than 120 people were killed, thousands displaced and hundreds of homes destroyed.

These attacks are reminiscent of the political violence in the area during the run up to the last election in 1992. The difference this time was that the violence began after the elections in December 1997 and for the first time members of the Kikuyu community retaliated to the attacks in an organised fashion, following the failure of the government security forces to act. The majority of the victims, many of whom were elderly, were unarmed and were attacked in their homes.

The report, which is based on the findings of a joint delegation of Amnesty International, Article 19 and Human Rights Watch which visited Kenya in March and April, is calling on:

- The Kenyan Government to take immediate action to prevent further human rights violations and to hold perpetrators of these violations accountable. Survivors of the violence in the area describe an ongoing 'war'. Although a small number of arrests have been made, the government has failed to investigate and punish armed aggressors, and to protect frightened, angry and displaced people.
- The international community to increase pressure on the Kenyan government to uphold its national and international legal obligations.
- All parties to the violence to refrain from making public statements which may incite the population to carry out acts of violence and to abide by international humanitarian law which provides for the protection of individuals taking no active part in hostilities.

For further information, please refer to Amnesty International's report: *Kenya: Political violence spirals*, AI Index: AFR 32/19/98. For an interview, please call the Amnesty International Press Office: +44 171 413 5566.