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Tanzania: Commission of Inquiry findings must be made public

As the Commission of Inquiry set up to investigate the violence surrounding demonstrations in Tanzania in January 2001 enters its final weeks of investigation, Amnesty International is calling for the speedy publication of the Commission's findings once completed and implementation of its recommendations.

"The fact that Amnesty International was invited to present its findings to the Commission in Zanzibar on 22 May 2002, demonstrates a real commitment to learning exactly what happened during the violence. Encouraged by the work of the Commission, we now await with much interest the publication of the results," the organization said today.

"It is our hope that the inquiry and other recent positive human rights developments will herald a new era for human rights promotion and protection in Tanzania, and Zanzibar in particular" the organization added.

During the demonstrations, Zanzibar police and militias, under Tanzanian federal police command, shot dead at least 22 mostly peaceful demonstrators. Many more were wounded. One police officer was killed by demonstrators. Hundreds of demonstrators and opposition party members were arbitrarily detained and tortured, and several women were reportedly raped in their homes by police or soldiers.

Since beginning its work in January 2001, the Commission has heard testimony from hundreds of victims, their families and other witnesses to the events. It is due to present its findings to President Benjamin Mkapa by the end of July 2002.

Amnesty International is calling on the Tanzanian government to make public the findings and ensure its recommendations are implemented without delay once the Commission has concluded its work. Compensation should be provided to the victims where appropriate. Those suspected to be responsible for unlawful killings, torture and rape should be brought to justice.

"For there to be real and lasting human rights protection, the government should ensure that no-one found responsible for violations is immune from justice. The shocking events of January 2001 require that far-reaching measures are taken to prevent such violence in the future -- this should include comprehensive human rights training for all police officers," Amnesty International added.

Background

On 27 January 2001, the opposition Civic United Front (CUF) organized demonstrations in Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania, demanding a re-run of the October 2000 elections. The government banned the

demonstrations and proceeded to violently disperse the demonstrators. At least 22 people were shot dead by armed police on Pemba island - but perhaps as many as 60 according to CUF - in circumstances suggesting unlawful use of lethal force. There were mass arrests and systematic torture and ill-treatment of prisoners.

On 10 October 2001 the ruling *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (CCM), Party of the Revolution, signed an agreement with the CUF to end the political impasse following the January violence. The agreement included a number of human rights issues, including establishing an independent commission of inquiry and providing compensation to those affected by the January violence.

In addition to the Commission of Inquiry, a national Human Rights Commission has recently been established in the country which could provide an avenue for individuals and organizations to report violations of human rights, to have their cases heard and to see justice done

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