

Tanzania: Inquiry into Zanzibar killings must be prompt, independent and impartial

Amnesty International today welcomed the recent agreement, between the Tanzanian government and the opposition Civic United Front (CUF), to establish an independent commission of inquiry to investigate human rights violations which occurred during the demonstrations in Zanzibar in January 2001.

"The decision to set up an inquiry into the January demonstration violence is an important step for the future of human rights in Tanzania. The government of Tanzania and the semi-autonomous government of Zanzibar must now ensure that the inquiry is fully independent, established without delay and carried out in accordance with international human rights standards," the organization said today.

In a memorandum sent to the governments of Tanzania and Zanzibar, the organization details human rights violations by the security forces, committed in connection with the opposition demonstration, including killings, mass arrests, torture and rape in Zanzibar.

"It is our hope that the report on the violations and the recommendations set out in the memorandum will be a starting point for the commission of inquiry when it begins its work", the organization added.

The memorandum sets out Amnesty International's key recommendations for the establishment of the inquiry, calls for compensation to be provided to the victims of the violence or their

families, and for anyone found responsible for human rights violations to be brought to justice.

"For too long human rights violations have gone unpunished in Zanzibar. The authorities now have the opportunity to correct this culture of impunity and to provide justice and compensation for those whose rights were violated," Amnesty International said.

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 in circumstances suggesting unlawful use of lethal force. There were mass arrests. Some of those arrested were subjected to torture and ill-treatment.

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.

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