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Uganda: Urgent need to end torture following death in custody

Amnesty International is gravely concerned at the persistent reports of torture by members of Uganda's Violent Crime Crack Unit (VCCU).

"The recent death of Nsangi Murisidi as a result of torture at the hands of VCCU officers is further confirmation of an entrenched pattern of torture of detainees while in custody," the organization said today.

Nsangi Murisidi, a small business holder, was picked up by the VCCU officers from his place of work in Owino Market in Kampala on 14 June 2003, the last day he was seen alive. The family traced him to the VCCU headquarters in Kireka. On being denied access to him, the relatives suspected he was already dead.

On 18 June, a lawyer representing the family received confirmation of the death in custody of Nsangi Murisidi from the VCCU officers in Kireka. The death certificate states the causes of death as extensive loss of fluid and blood, severe bleeding in the brain and extensive burns on the buttocks.

"The Ugandan government should take immediate steps to initiate a prompt and impartial investigation into the circumstances of the death of Nsangi Murisidi and ensure that those responsible for his death should be brought to justice," Amnesty International said.

In addition, Amnesty International is calling for an urgent, public, independent and impartial, judge-led inquiry into the activities of the VCCU in order to ensure full accountability for alleged human rights violations committed by the unit's agents.

"The Ugandan authorities should implement the recommendations of such an inquiry to bring VCCU agents under effective control," the organization concluded.

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