

PUBLIC

AI Index: AMR 38/017/2004

10 November 2004

UA 302/04 Death threats

JAMAICA Errol Reid (m)

Errol Reid, an eyewitness to the killing of a street vendor by Jamaican police, has received over twenty death threats. Amnesty International fears that these threats are part of a deliberate strategy to prevent him from testifying at the inquest into the killing of the vendor, Basil Brown, in February 2003.

Errol Reid received the first death threat at the beginning of October 2004, around the start of the inquest. A telephone caller told Errol Reid that, "You have 21 days fi dead" ("You will be dead in 21 days").

The second death threat came around 5pm on 11 October, after Errol Reid had given evidence at the inquest. A caller reportedly asked him, "why [don't you] come outside [your] house so that we can kill you?". On 8 November, he received 20 calls on his cell phone and land lines, some silent, some containing further death threats.

On 8 November the presiding magistrate adjourned the inquest into the killing of Basil Brown for a week so that more civilian witnesses could be located. A formal report into the threats against Errol Reid was made yesterday to the Bureau of Special Investigations, a police investigations unit. National human rights organisations have also expressed concern around the reported threats.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Basil Brown, a Rastafarian, had spent seven years working as a street vendor outside Andrew's Memorial Hospital in Kingston. He was reportedly killed outside the hospital during a Metropolitan Parks and Market (MPM) operation to rid the streets of vendors. MPM workers had reportedly disabled Brown's cart and were beating him within sight of the police. Brown allegedly took up a machete in an effort to defend himself when the police fired a shot that hit him.

Even though he was shot outside a hospital, the police took him to a different hospital for treatment, with witnesses alleging that police took longer than necessary to get there. Others who left the scene to drive to the hospital reportedly arrived almost an hour before the police arrived, by which time Basil Brown had died. Government pathologists initially refused to allow an independent observer to observe his post mortem on the family's behalf. The killing of Basil Brown was investigated by the Bureau of Special Investigations, and an inquest into his death was ordered by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) earlier this year.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English:

- expressing concern at reports that the Errol Reid, a witness to the fatal police shooting of Basil Brown on 17 February 2003, has received numerous death threats;
- expressing concern that these threats may be part of a deliberate strategy to intimidate Errol Reid against testifying at the inquest into the death of Basil Brown;
- calling for immediate measures to be implemented to protect Errol Reid, and other witnesses who may give evidence, along with their legal representatives and families;
- calling for an immediate impartial investigation into the threats against Errol Reid, and for the results to be made public.

APPEALS TO:

Francis A. Forbes, CD, LL.B.
Commissioner of Police

Office of the Commissioner
101-105 Old Hope Road
Kingston 6,
Jamaica
Fax: + 1 876 927 7516
Salutation: Dear Commissioner

Granville Gauze
Assistant Commissioner of Police
Bureau of Special Investigations
12 Ocean Boulevard
Kingston,
Jamaica
Fax + 1 876 924 9123
Salutation Dear Assistant Commissioner

COPIES TO:

The Hon. Dr. Peter Philipps
Minister for National Security
Mutual Life Building
North Tower
2 Oxford Road
PO Box 472
Kingston 5,
Jamaica
Fax: + 1 876 906 1713
Salutation: Dear Minister

Police Public Complaints Authority
45-47 Barbados Avenue
Kingston 5,
Jamaica
Fax: + 1 876 967 4063 / 968 1932

and to diplomatic representatives of Jamaica accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 December 2004.