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SIERRA LEONE: INQUEST OR COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO 1992 EXTRA-JUDICIAL EXECUTIONS MUST FORM PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO END IMPUNITY

The announcement by the government of Sierra Leone of an inquest or commission of inquiry into the 1992 extra-judicial execution of 26 people must not signal an isolated process that focuses only on past crimes alleged to have been committed by political opponents of the administration.

In a recent report to the Security Council, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon warned that the proposed exercise might be interpreted as politically-motivated and could undermine stability ahead of the 2012 national elections. The UN has expressed concerns over the action, which has “generated strong ethnically motivated and inflammatory attacks in the local media targeting both the opposition and the government.”

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has already considered the crimes in question and found that the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) executed 26 individuals accused of plotting a coup, “without due process of law and in flagrant violation of international standards.” The grave nature of these crimes cannot be underestimated. Extra-judicial executions are serious human rights violations that – like crimes against humanity, war crimes, torture and enforced disappearances committed in Sierra Leone – must be investigated and prosecuted.

At the same time, justice must be fair, impartial and independent. For the authorities to focus only on certain crimes and to ignore the thousands of other serious human rights violations identified in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report risks further undermining the weak rule of law in Sierra Leone.

Amnesty International repeats its call for the government to establish a comprehensive plan of action to investigate and prosecute all crimes committed in Sierra Leone for which impunity continues to exist, and to ensure full and effective reparations for victims. In particular we call again for the government to repeal the Lome Amnesty Law which obstructs justice for thousands of Sierra Leoneans who are the victims or relatives of victims of serious human rights violations.