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Five years after the G8 Genoa policing operations: Italian authorities must take concrete action to prevent and prosecute police brutality in all circumstances

Five years after the policing operation during the G8 summit in Genoa in July 2001, the Italian authorities are still inactive in taking measures which would effectively promote police accountability. Concrete steps in this direction are urgently needed both in connection with the serious allegations of police brutality during the G8 Genoa summit and in the broader context of frequent impunity for law enforcement and prison officers accused of torture, ill-treatment and excessive use of force, as Amnesty International has recorded over many years.

On 20-22 July 2001, the Italian city Genoa hosted a G8 summit. In the days immediately preceding and during the summit over 200,000 people participated in anti-globalization demonstrations on the streets of Genoa. The vast majority protested peacefully. However, some demonstrations degenerated into violence, resulting in significant injuries to people and extensive damage to property. A great number of reports of human rights violations committed by law enforcement officers, prison officers and medical personnel against Italian citizens and foreign nationals emerged immediately and have continued to do so ever since. By the end of the summit, one protester, Carlo Giuliani, had been shot dead, hundreds of people had been injured and more than 280 people, many of them foreign nationals, had been detained.

In May 2003 the inquiry into the fatal shooting of Carlo Giuliani by a law enforcement officer then performing his military service in the *carabinieri* force, ended with the judge of the preliminary investigation ruling that the officer had acted in self-defence, making legitimate use of his firearm, and should not be charged. The judge concluded that using a pistol was the only means which the officer had at his disposal to confront the demonstrators' violent attack. It further concluded that, after waving his pistol in warning, he had fired the fatal shot but had not aimed at Carlo Giuliani but into the air, and that the shot's trajectory was deflected by a chunk of plaster thrown by a demonstrator.

In April 2005, almost four years after the events, the trial of police officers involved in an overnight police raid on a school used as a dormitory for demonstrators and as a centre for the Genoa Social Forum, the umbrella group organizing the main program of demonstrations, began. Dozens of people arrested during the raid suffered injuries, some of them requiring urgent hospitalization and, in some cases, surgical operations. The officers currently on trial are charged with various offences, including assault and battery, falsifying and planting evidence, and abusing their powers as officers of the state. None of them, however, have been suspended from duty, and scores of other law enforcement officers believed to have participated in assaults could not be identified because their faces were hidden by masks, scarves or riot helmets and they wore no numbers or name tags. The trial is ongoing and the tribunal is currently hearing testimonies regarding the raid.

In October 2005 the trial of police officers, *carabinieri*, prison guards and medical personnel accused of verbal and physical abuse of detainees in the Bolzaneto temporary detention facility through which over 200 detainees passed during the summit opened. The detainees were reportedly slapped, kicked, punched and spat on; subjected to threats, including of rape, and to verbal abuse, including of an obscene sexual nature; and deprived of food, water and sleep for lengthy periods. The trial is ongoing.

Amnesty International has welcomed the opening of these trials as significant steps towards combating police impunity. However, the organization must highlight its concern, as it has done repeatedly in recent years, regarding the failure of Italian authorities in establishing effective mechanisms to prevent police brutality and in adopting concrete measures to ensure prosecution of all law enforcement agents suspected of torture, ill-treatment, excessive or unnecessary use of force and other human rights violations

Italy, which still lacks an independent national human rights institution, has not established an independent public commission of inquiry into the G8 summit events, as requested by Amnesty International in view of the scale and gravity of the allegations. Amnesty International re-iterates its call on the Italian authorities to set up such a commission, which should carry out a wide-ranging investigation into allegations of human rights violations to which the criminal trials alone are unlikely to provide an adequately comprehensive response. Amnesty International believes that the commission should: be composed of persons of acknowledged probity and impartiality; have its scope, methods and findings made public; be given jurisdiction to take evidence from people alleging that they have been ill-treated by law enforcement and prison officers; file interim reports to facilitate the prompt initiation of any appropriate criminal or disciplinary proceedings; be given the authority to recommend that criminal prosecutions or disciplinary proceedings be brought against any officers against whom there is substantive evidence that they have engaged in torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or used excessive force.

Amnesty International calls the Italian authorities to conduct a thorough review of current policing practices, including the training and deployment of law enforcement officials in crowd control and the regulations on the use of force and firearms by law enforcement officials. Key measures should be adopted in compliance with provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), The UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman Or Degrading Treatment Or Punishment, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) as well as in accordance with the rules of the UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and the European Code of Police Ethics adopted by the Council of Europe. In particular, to avoid situations of recurring impunity, Italy must ensure that its officers are adequately equipped and trained to employ non-violent means before resorting, where strictly necessary, to the use of force and firearms; are trained and equipped to use non-lethal methods of crowd control; are subject to strict regulations regarding the use of such methods and are tied to a strict system of accountability. In order to be accountable, officers should be obliged to display some forms of individual identification during operations, as Amnesty International has recommended in the past.

Italy must take urgent steps towards the eradication of impunity among law enforcement officers. Such measures include introducing torture as a crime into its penal code, eighteen years after ratifying the UN Convention Against Torture, and thus filling a deplorable and crucial gap in its legal system. Amnesty International further calls on Italy to ratify the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention Against Torture.

