

6 February 2002

AI Index AFR 60/001/2002 - News Service Nr. 24

Burkina Faso: Amnesty International calls for an investigation into massive extrajudicial executions

The Government of Burkina Faso should immediately investigate allegations made by the Burkinabe Human and Peoples' Rights Movement (MBDHP) that 106 extra-judicial executions have taken place over the past three months, Amnesty International said today after raising its concerns to the government.

According to MBDHP, the unburied dead bodies were found handcuffed, bullet-ridden and "thrown to the dogs and vultures". Reports say the bodies were found throughout the country, in areas such as Bobo-Dioulasso, Kaya, Ougadougou and surroundings, Boulsa and Ouahigouya.

The Minister of Security, Djibrill Yipéné Bassolet acknowledged on Monday the involvement of the police in the killings, but added that: "There has never been any extra-judicial killing. What may have happened is that in the face of the menace that bandits constitute, security forces were compelled to use rigorous methods to overpower armed gangs".

"The Minister's statement is regrettable as it constitutes a prejudgment and hints that no investigation will be set up," Amnesty International said.

The organization urges the Government of Burkina Faso to reconsider its position and carry out an exhaustive, impartial and independent investigation to find those responsible for the killings and determine whether the police exerted an excessive force against the presumed criminals. All those suspected of being responsible for the killings must be brought to justice according to international standards of fair trial.

It is extremely grave that the alleged extrajudicial executions might have been carried out in a premeditated way as part of an anti-banditry campaign launched by the National Police in 2001 to curb crime throughout the country.

"Extra-judicial killings constitute a serious breach of international law to which Burkina Faso is a party. The government should immediately ensure that no such executions take place in the future," Amnesty International said.

Background

The government of Burkina Faso has frequently reacted adversely to public demands for an end to impunity in Burkina Faso.

On 13 December 1998 the badly burned bodies of Norbert Zongo, an independent journalist, and his three companions, Ernest Zongo, Ablassé Nikiéma, and Blaise Ilboudo were found in and around a vehicle about 100 kilometres from Ouagadougou. The Independent

Commission of Inquiry set up to investigate the deaths concluded that Norbert Zongo had been killed for purely political reasons and named five suspects.

Members of a coalition formed to press for those responsible for the killings to be brought to justice and for an end to impunity, were arrested and detained. Demonstrations against impunity were prevented or dispersed by the security forces. Only one of the five suspects named by the Commission has so far been indicted.

\ENDS

public document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>