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Guyana: Amnesty International's forensic expert to undertake second autopsy of Yohance Douglas

Dr. Sidsel Rogde, a professor of forensic pathology from Norway, will today be undertaking an autopsy on Yohance Douglas, who was shot and killed by members of the Guyana Police Force in Georgetown, Guyana, on 1 March 2003. Professor Rogde will be working at the request of and acting as a consultant to Amnesty International.

Professor Rogde is a highly experienced pathologist. She has previously worked for Amnesty International, most recently in Kenya. She is involved in human rights initiatives by the Norwegian Medical Association, the professional body for Norwegian medical practitioners. Professor Rogde conducts annual training of pathologists in Turkey and Bosnia.

Professor Rogde was previously scheduled to observe the autopsy on Yohance Douglas carried out by the state pathology service, in order to measure the conduct of the autopsy against the principles embodied in the United Nations Manual on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-Legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions (New York 1991). Although the authorities granted permission for independent observers to be present, the autopsy took place on 5 March without observers.

As a delegate working on behalf of Amnesty International, Professor Rogde is required to maintain confidentiality in respect of information gained and will not undertake any broadcasting or writing commitment related to the autopsy for the duration of her stay in Guyana. She will report directly to the International Secretariat of Amnesty International in London.

Any press enquiries should be directed to Amnesty International's International Secretariat, on: +44 207 413 5566 or Olivia Streater and Pier Bannister on +1 876 929 9000

Background

The above-mentioned principles state, *inter alia*, that investigations of all suspected cases of extra-legal, arbitrary or summary executions shall include an adequate autopsy, as well as collection and analysis of all physical and documentary evidence and statements from witnesses. The body of the deceased person shall not be disposed of until an adequate autopsy is conducted by a physician, who shall, if possible, be an expert in forensic pathology. The autopsy report must describe any and all injuries to the deceased including any evidence of torture.

Autopsy reports should attempt to establish the identity of the deceased and the cause, manner, time and place of death.

Yohance Douglas, an 18 year-old architecture student, was killed on 1 March 2003 in Georgetown in disputed circumstances. Initial police reports indicated that the shooting had occurred during a confrontation. Subsequent police reports suggested that he was fatally shot during an attempt to intercept the car in which he was travelling. Witnesses however allege that plain clothes police officers opened fire without provocation on the car. Two fellow passengers in the car were shot and injured, one of them seriously.

The killing of Yohance Douglas has provoked protest and calls for reform from many people and organisations in Guyana, including the Guyana Bar Association, the Guyana Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Guyana Human Rights Association, Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU), the Holy Spirit Roman Catholic Church Community of North Ruimveldt, the People's National Party (Reform), the People's Progressive Party, ROAR, the University of Guyana Students Society and students and lecturers from the University of Guyana and teachers.

Public Document

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