

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Extrajudicial Executions

28 October 1991

MADAGASCAR

Jean Barton RAMITASOA, aged 22

~~Aly Aden OUARSSAN~~

and as many as 10 others

At least two and possibly as many as 12 people are reported to have been shot dead by the security forces on 23 October 1991 during a peaceful demonstration in the town of Antsiranana in the north of Madagascar. At least 70 other people are believed to have been wounded. This comes after the killing of at least 30 people in August 1991 in similar circumstances.

Amnesty International is concerned that the use of excessive and indiscriminate force by the security forces has again led to the extrajudicial execution of civilian demonstrators, and is calling upon the Malagasy authorities to investigate fully the circumstances of the killings and woundings, making public its findings and bringing to justice any members of the security forces responsible for human rights violations. Although the Prime Minister reportedly ordered an inquiry into the August 1991 killings, the outcome of any inquiry has not been made known to date.

On 23 October 1991 supporters of an opposition alliance, Hery Velona (Comité des forces vives, Active Forces Committee) had apparently gathered in Antsiranana to mark out, in advance, the route for a larger march planned the following day. According to reports, members of the armed forces threw tear-gas grenades and opened fire on the demonstrators as they approached the residence of the provincial governor. The demonstrators reportedly did not use or threaten violence and it appears that the troops fired indiscriminately and without provocation. The exact number of those killed is not yet clear, but is believed to include **Jean Barton RAMITASOA** and **Aly Aden OUARSSAN**. The Ministry of the Interior has acknowledged that one person was killed and 68 injured when troops fired on opposition demonstrators, while an independent Malagasy newspaper reports that four people died; Hery Velona itself claims that there were 12 fatalities.

At least 30 - and possibly as many as 130 - people were killed on 10 August 1991 when the Presidential Guard threw grenades and fired on a crowd of thousands marching towards the palace of President Didier Ratsiraka to call for his resignation. Another 200 people were reported to have been wounded. President Ratsiraka subsequently denied that the Presidential Guard were responsible for the killings and blamed other branches of the security forces. However, evidence suggests that the Presidential Guard, acting under the orders of the President, deliberately opened fire on the crowd. The newly-appointed Prime Minister, Guy Willy Razanamasy, reportedly ordered an inquiry into killings but there has been no indication that such an inquiry has taken place and, if so, its findings have not been made public. On the same day more than 10 people were reported to have been killed by security forces in the town of Mahajanga in the north of Madagascar.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In mid-1991 Hery Velona began to organize mass demonstrations and strikes in an attempt

to force the resignation of President Ratsiraka who has been in power since 1975. A state of emergency was introduced on 23 July 1991 which allowed the authorities to impose a curfew, censor the press and restrict the movement of individuals believed to be a threat to public order and remained in effect until the beginning of September 1991. Between 22 and 27 July 1991 four shadow "government ministers" appointed by Hery Velona were detained for several days after they tried to occupy ministerial offices. President Ratsiraka has continued to refuse to suspend the 1975 Constitution or to set a date for legislative elections. Strikes have continued and all attempts to resolve the political deadlock have so far been unsuccessful.

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RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/airmail letters:

- expressing concern that at least two, and possibly as many as 12, people were shot dead and dozens of others were wounded by troops of the armed forces during a reportedly peaceful demonstration in Antsirananana on 23 October 1991;
- explaining that the killings appear to be a serious violation of human rights, both of the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression and of the right to life, which Madagascar is committed to upholding as a result of ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- calling for an independent inquiry into these killings, for its findings to be made public and those responsible for killing and wounding peaceful demonstrators to be brought to justice;
- urging the authorities also to make public the findings of the inquiry into the killings of at least 30, as possibly as many as 130, people on 10 August 1991 by the Presidential Guard, and asking whether those responsible are being brought to justice;
- stating that, while recognising the responsibility of the authorities to maintain law and order, it appears that on both occasions the security forces used excessive and indiscriminate force against unarmed civilian demonstrators;
- urging that immediate measures be taken to ensure that the security forces are given strict instructions to curb the use of lethal force. Refer to Article 3 of the United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, adopted by the General Assembly on 17 December 1979 (Code de conduite pour les responsables de l'application des lois): "Law enforcement officials may use force only when strictly necessary and to the extent required for the performance of their duty." ("Les responsables de l'application des lois peuvent recourir à la force seulement lorsque cela est strictement nécessaire et dans la mesure exigée par l'accomplissement de leurs fonctions.").

APPEALS TO

1) Son Excellence **Monsieur le Président de la République**
Monsieur L'Amiral Didier Ratsiraka
Président de la République, La Présidence
Ambohitsorohitra, ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar
Telegrams: President Ratsiraka, Antananarivo, Madagascar

2) Son Excellence **Monsieur le Premier Ministre**
Monsieur Guy Willy Razanamasy
Premier Ministre, Mahazoarivo
101 ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar
Telegrams: Premier Ministre, Antananarivo, Madagascar

3) Son Excellence **Monsieur le Ministre**
Monsieur le Colonel Charles Sylvain Rabotoarison
Ministre de l'Intérieur, Ministère de l'Intérieur, Anosy
101 ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar

Telegrams: Ministre de l'Interieur, Antananarivo, Madagascar

4) Son Excellence

Monsieur le Ministre délégué

Monsieur Ferdinand Ranafikely

Ministre délégué chargé de la Sécurité

Ministère de la Sécurité

101 ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar

Telegrams: Ministre délégué chargé de la Securite, Antananarivo, Madagascar

COPIES TO:

Son Excellence

Monsieur Césaire Rabenoro

Ministre des Affaires Etrangères

Ministère des Affaires Etrangères

Anosy

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Madagascar

Midi-Madagascar

BP 1414, Ankorondrano

101 ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar

Madagascar Tribune

Immeuble SME

rue Ravoninahitriniarivo

Ankorondrano, 101 ANTANANARIVO

Madagascar

and to diplomatic representatives of Madagascar in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 December 1991.