

Public Statement

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Jamaica: One year on from Braeton: Another suspected extrajudicial execution sets a grim reminder that police continue to kill with impunity

One year after seven youths were gunned down by police in Braeton, Jamaica, Jevan Campbell, Douglas Rhoden, Gregory Sharp and Glenroy Stewart were killed by police on March 6 2002. Amnesty International believes that the circumstances surrounding the shootings suggest that the deaths amounted to extrajudicial executions.

The organisation has received reports alleging that the four men were taken away unarmed, handcuffed, beaten and shot by police. Reports also state that eyewitnesses have since received death threats from police purportedly to prevent them from testifying. The Commissioner of Police has been informed of complaints filed by eyewitnesses, which contradict police statements that the men died after engaging the police in an exchange of gunfire. The killings led to widespread demonstrations in the community.

Amnesty International is calling on the Jamaican government to immediately investigate these killings and reported death threats, along with all other killings committed by members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force, in accordance with international standards.

In the year since Tamoya Wilson, Christopher Grant, Curtis Smith, Reagon Beckford, Andre Virgo, Lancebert Clark and Dane Whyte were killed by members of the Crime Management Unit in Braeton, more than 120 Jamaican citizens have been killed by the police. The Jamaican authorities have admitted to Amnesty International that human rights violations have been committed by members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force. However, since the Braeton killings, not one trial of a police officer charged with human rights violations has been completed.

As the inquest into the "Braeton 7" enters its 10th week, last week's allegations are a grim reminder that killings by police continue with impunity. The apparent refusal by the Director of Public Prosecutions to prosecute officers, even in cases where inquest juries have ruled that police officers should be held criminally responsible, suggests an official reluctance to hold the security forces fully accountable for their actions. The evidence reveals a continuing pattern of failure by the authorities to bring police officers who flout the law to justice.

In January 2002, the Minister of National Security stated that, "no-one is above the law". Now is the perfect time for him to prove his words with action and to bring to justice any officer implicated in human rights violations.

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