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Trinidad and Tobago: One year on, no truth and no justice for Anton Cooper

One year after the killing of Anton Cooper in Golden Grove Remand Centre, Arouca, the authorities of Trinidad and Tobago have manifestly failed to provide any adequate explanation of the circumstances leading to his death, Amnesty International said today, renewing its call for a thorough investigation into the case.

"The authorities of Trinidad and Tobago have failed Anton Cooper, and his relatives, twice over," Amnesty International said. "Not only did they fail to protect his life while he was in their custody, they have also failed to hold any meaningful investigation into the circumstances surrounding his death."

Anton Cooper was found dead in his cell in the early hours of 26 June 2001. His body, which was naked and wet, bore the signs of a severe beating, and the cause of death was declared as "asphyxia associated with multiple blunt traumatic injuries". Since Anton Cooper's death, numerous other prisoners at the Remand Centre have reported witnessing him being brutally beaten by prison guards.

"Despite strong evidence that Anton Cooper was beaten to death by those who were responsible for his safety, no action has been taken to identify those responsible and hold them accountable," Amnesty International added. "This is in violation of Trinidad and Tobago's obligations to protect the lives of its citizens and to fully investigate the circumstances of any deaths in custody, as well as of the state's moral obligation to the Cooper family."

To date, the authorities of Trinidad and Tobago have ignored or failed to adequately answer numerous letters from the lawyers representing Anton Cooper's family and from Amnesty International. The organization's members will start today a new campaign for an immediate, impartial and comprehensive investigation into the circumstances of Anton Cooper's death.

Background

Amnesty International has long term concerns about prison conditions in Trinidad and Tobago, including overcrowding, brutality by guards, lack of adequate medical care and insufficient sleeping, bathing and sanitation facilities. Prison conditions are of such an appalling standard as

to constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Amnesty International is further concerned that such appalling prison conditions exacerbate the pressures on prison officers and provide fertile ground for discontent and frustration for those working in prison, contributing to an atmosphere in which prisoners' human rights are violated.

**Please see Amnesty International's report "*The killing of Anton Cooper: What I saw was murder*" at: <http://www.web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/index/amr490032002>

Public Document

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