

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Kenya: The killing of six unarmed prisoners should be thoroughly investigated**

“The killing of six unarmed, naked prisoners in Kenya by prison warders appears yet again to show the authorities’ lack of respect for the human rights of Kenyans” said Amnesty International today.

The six were part of a group of eight prisoners on death row who attempted to escape from King’ong’o Prison in Nyeri, 150 kilometres from Nairobi, in the early hours of Monday 4 September 2000. Residents from the neighbouring estate reported being woken at 2am by gunfire which lasted almost 40 minutes.

The prisoners allegedly were shot indiscriminately by scores of armed warders, when attempting to scale a wall using their uniforms and blankets to make a rope.

The prison authorities in Kenya have announced an investigation into the incident in conjunction with the continuing police inquiry.

Amnesty International said. “Without a thorough and independent investigation - including an effective post mortem - there is a concern that the events leading up to the killings will never be established and the excessive use of force by security officers in Kenya will yet again go unchallenged.”

The organization has repeatedly and publicly condemned the excessive use of force by police in Kenya, including during demonstrations and arrests of criminal suspects. In a number of incidents the use of excessive force has amounted to targeted extrajudicial executions.

### **Background**

The eight men had been sentenced to death for robbery with violence at different Magistrate's Courts between January and August 2000, after unfair trials where defendants do not have the right to legal aid.

Although no one has been executed for more than 10 years in Kenya, there are currently more than 1,000 people on death row, a number of whom have been under sentence of death for many years.

No local or international human rights organizations have been allowed access to Kenyan prisons. Unhampered access was one of the recommendations in the recent report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on torture, who raised serious concerns about the widespread use of torture in Kenya by security officers. Conditions in prisons in Kenya are appalling, with severe overcrowding, lack of adequate clothing, food and medication, which has resulted in their being termed “death chambers” by a leading member of the judiciary.

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