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DEATHS OF DETAINEES AND POLICE
BRUTALITY IN SOUTH AFRICA SINCE THE
SOWETO MASSACRE IN JUNE 1976

Extracts from the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group
of Experts** prepared in pursuance of resolution
2082 A (LXII) of the Economic and Social Council

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Members of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts of the Commission on Human Rights, of national capacity, are: Mr. Kéba M'baye (Senegal), Chairman-Rapporteur, Mr. Branimir Janković (Yugoslavia), Vice-Chairman, Mr. Amjad Ali (India), Mr. Annan Arkyin Cato (Ghana), Mr. Humberto Díaz Casanueva (Chile) and Mr. Felix Ermacora (Austria).

The Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts was set up in 1967 in pursuance of resolution 2 (XXIII) of the Commission on Human Rights to investigate torture and ill-treatment of prisoners, detainees and persons in police custody in the Republic of South Africa.

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Acknowledgement, together with a copy of the publication containing the reprint, would be appreciated.

Introduction

The present report, submitted pursuant to resolution 2082 A (LXII) of the Economic and Social Council, is based essentially on first-hand information presented at meetings of the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts in the form of oral evidence and written communications by interested individuals or organizations. In addition, the Group studied and analysed the relevant documents of the United Nations, particularly the reports and publications of the Special Committee against Apartheid and the Centre against Apartheid. The Group also took account of information culled from various other publications and from newspapers and periodicals describing the events which have occurred in South Africa since 16 June 1976.

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Chapter I. Brutality of the South African police since the Soweto massacre of 16 June 1976

In its last report, submitted to the Commission on Human Rights at its thirty-third session in 1977, the Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts noted that the commission of inquiry into the Soweto massacre consisted of only one member, Mr. Justice Cillie, a white, and that the Government had refused to appoint other members with equal representation for blacks. The Group also described the disturbances, arrests and police brutality at Soweto and elsewhere from 16 June until October 1976. 1/

According to information given to the Cillie Commission, the police in September 1976 admitted injuring 1,439 blacks in Soweto (1,001 Africans were allegedly injured by "other elements") and 387 in Cape Town (25 were allegedly injured by persons "other than policemen"). 2/ According to other sources, these figures are much lower than the facts indicate, as the number of injured persons at the end of 1976 was 2,160. 3/

Professor J. J. F. Taljaard, a specialist in pathology, and Dr. H. Bukhofze, both of whom were working at Johannesburg Hospital, appeared on 13 October 1976 before the Cillie Commission. 4/ They supplied the following details concerning Africans who were killed in the area of Johannesburg: 5/ (i) the autopsies conducted on the 229 persons killed between 18 June and 18 August 1976 revealed that two thirds of them died from bullet-wounds and the others from multiple injuries, some of which were inflicted by a knife; (ii) in the area of Johannesburg and West Rand alone, 80 of the 229 persons killed were struck from the back, 42 from the front and 28 from the side; (iii) 224 of the victims were black, 3 Coloured and 2 white; one was under 10 years of age, 88 were under 20 years of age, 69 were between 20 and 30 years of age and 46 were over 30 years of age.

The Commission was also informed of the death of 97 persons in Cape Town, 92 of whom were killed by the police. Everything seems to indicate that the death toll was actually far higher. The Ad Hoc Working Group of Experts had already taken note of 90 deaths in Cape Province in December 1976 alone. 6/ Moreover, the International Defence and Aid Fund has established beyond doubt that 617 persons died between 16 June and December 1976, "although the actual figure must certainly be over 1,000 (some of the victims were barely 5 or 6 years of age)". 7/

1/ E/CN.4/1222, paras. 49-55, 246-257.

2/ "The Soweto riots and subsequent unrest", Survey 1976, South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), p. 85.

3/ "Black South Africa explodes", Counter Information Services (CIS), 1977.

4/ See above, para. 1.

5/ SAIRR, op. cit., p. 85.

6/ E/CN.4/1222, para. 52.

7/ "Soweto and the Uprisings of 1976 in South Africa" published by International Defence and Aid Fund, London, 1977.