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used and that the police continues to be responsible for widespread human rights violations, including torture. In Tanzania, the police are similarly criticized for a style of policing that is defined by violence, impunity and secrecy. The region's civil society is unanimous that much work remains to be done in order to strengthen the systems by which police are held to account to the people and the constitution, including building strong internal integrity management systems and improving service delivery and partnerships between police and communities.

Across the region, policing remains highly political and is still very much tied to the apron strings of the political masters. At a national level, the political will to engage in, and sustain, the type of reform that will transform policing to accord with principles of democratic governance is often absent. The benefit of a regional and international approach to the police reform agendas in the EAC is its ability to create spaces for reform stakeholders that would otherwise be absent in a polarized national context.

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Human Rights Defenders Extra Judicial Killings and the need for Police Reforms in East Africa

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Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) is an independent national human rights institution established by the government through an Act of Parliament. Its core mandate is to further the protection and promotion of human rights in Kenya. Its key programme areas are investigating complaints, providing redress, campaigns, advocacy, research, policy and legislation, economic, social and cultural rights, education and capacity building and institutional strengthening.

The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP) is the Secretariat for a network of over 65 human rights organizations based in 10 countries in the East and Horn of Africa. EHAHRDP has 3 key programmes: Human Rights Defender (HRDs) advocacy – at national, regional and international levels; protection - to ensure that HRDs receive necessary protection for them to be able to pursue their legitimate work; & capacity building – to ensure that HRDs acquire the necessary skills for them to work in an effective and safe manner.



Wednesday
3 June 2009
from 1400 - 1600



Room 25
UNOG
Refreshments Provided



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS, EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLINGS AND THE NEED FOR POLICE REFORMS IN EAST AFRICA

UNHRC SIDE EVENT

There is no doubt that police reform is urgently needed in Kenya. The police response to the violence following the disputed December 2007 national election and the subsequent accusations of police complicity is proof. Indeed, the Waki Commission report into the post-election violence strongly recommended comprehensive reform of the Kenya Police Force (KPF).

The February 2009 release of the UN Special Rapporteur's preliminary report on extra judicial executions by the KPF again brought the crisis to the fore. The report confirmed the existence of systematic and widespread strategies within the KPF to execute individuals.

The responses to the release of the report have included the execution style murder of two prominent human rights defenders, Oscar Kingara and John Olulu of the Oscar Foundation Free Legal Aid Clinic, death threats to many other prominent members of Kenyan civil society and widespread protests at the police action which also resulted in the death of at least one police officer and several civilians. The current situation has resulted in a complete lack of state protection being accorded to human rights defenders as well as the general population's trust in the police being at an all time low. In Central Province, normal life was recently brought to a virtual standstill as 2000 members of a vigilante group hunted down and killed 14 suspected Mungiki members, only for suspected Mungiki members to embark on a revenge attack leaving 29 people dead in what has become known as the Mathira massacre.

On the other hand, opportunities for reform are present. The recent establishment by the government of the Kenya Police Oversight Board and the special Police Reform Task Force has potential to herald a new era of police oversight. However, the level of political will that would be needed to ensure that these opportunities develop into significant and credible advances remains a matter of concern. While the new initiatives may indicate renewed political investment in reform, this development comes at a time when the continuation of the flagship reform programme, Governance, Justice, Law and Order Sector (GJLOS), in its current format is a matter of debate.

The Kenyan experience of policing and reform is symptomatic of the challenges to policing across the East African Community (EAC). For example, successive delays to the long promised police review in Uganda has meant that policing remains heavily militarized, colonial style of policing continues to be

PARTNERS

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) was established in 1987 and is an independent, non-partisan, international non-government organization mandated to ensure the practical realization of human rights across the Commonwealth. CHRI has been working on the UN Human Rights Council since its inception in 2006. Facilitating cross regional advocacy at the Council has been one of CHRI's major aims. As an international organisation headquartered in the global south, CHRI endeavours to strengthen participation from

Southern Commonwealth countries at the UN level.

The Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU), founded in 1992, is an NGO that seeks to promote the rights of torture victims, public interest litigation and protect Kenyans from all forms of state perpetrated torture by advocating for legal and policy reforms. It also monitors government adherence to human rights, rehabilitates victims of torture and capacity building of key stakeholders.

African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF) is a network of African policing practitioners drawn from state and non state institutions. It is active in promoting police reform through civilian oversight over policing. It believes that the broad values behind establishment of civilian oversight is to assist in restoring public confidence, develop a culture of human rights, integrity and transparency within the police and promote good working relationship between the police and the community.