



17 march 2014- An independent UN Human Rights expert says impunity is a major source of continued violence and murders in Papua New Guinea. The expert, [Christof Heyns](#), the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions says, after a 12 day fact finding visit, that excessive use of force by police is among the issues that were brought up. “There are high levels of violence in Papua New Guinea”, says Mr. Heyns. “During my visit, I was informed about various types of killings perpetrated in Papua New Guinea, such as killings related to accusations of sorcery or witchcraft, domestic violence, and killings during tribal fighting, but also the lethal consequences of the excessive use of force by the police and sometimes private security forces.”

During his visit Mr. Heyns examined the level of unlawful killings in Papua New Guinea, identifying impunity as a major source of the continuation of violence. The expert also examined efforts to prevent the killings and ensure justice and redress in such cases. “Papua New Guinea is likely to grow and play an increased role at least at the regional level in the near future, and currently has a unique opportunity to ensure that this future society is based on a solid human rights and rule of law foundation”, Mr. Heyns noted.

Mr. Heyns presented a series of recommendations to strengthen human rights, including the

right to life, in Papua New Guinea. Among them are the creation of an efficient national human rights institution, reform of the Police Investigative Unit, creating an enabling environment for the establishment of human rights NGOs, the involvement of the country's organized legal profession in impact litigation, education on the right to life in primary schools, and the establishment of a country office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the country.

However, the expert cautioned that the death penalty is not the answer to the current level of violence in the country. "I am concerned about the possible resumption of executions in Papua New Guinea which may result in violations of international law. I understand that the society is looking for ways to curb the violence it is experiencing, but the death penalty in my view provides a false sense of security. More effective policing of violent crime and education are but two of the areas where the focus should lie." Mr. Heyns will present a comprehensive report on his visit to Papua New Guinea to a forthcoming session of the UN Human Rights Council in 2015, where he will make specific recommendations to strengthen the protection of the right to life in the country.

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