



Museveni the King and President of East Africa!

Does he even know where his borders end?

Report: Uganda police unit tortures suspects

Posted by Musa

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) - An international rights group said Wednesday that a secretive Ugandan police unit frequently operates outside the law, carries out torture and in some cases kills suspects. Police denied the report and said its accusations were exaggerated.

Human Rights Watch said in a report released Wednesday that Uganda's Rapid Response Unit has a history of violent and unlawful operations since it was formed under a different name in 2002 by President Yoweri Museveni.

Daniel Bekele, the group's Africa director, said the unit tortures, detains and sometimes even kills suspects. The new report recommends that Uganda's police issue orders to end the illegal detention and torture of suspects and to end impunity for human rights violations committed by members of the Rapid Response Unit.

"The authorities and the donors who fund the police need to get serious about holding abusive officers of this unit accountable," Bekele said.

The head of the Rapid Response Unit, Joel Aguma, denied that his force operates outside the law. "No, no, no," he said. "Whatever we do is within the laws of Uganda."

The report's author talked to 77 Rapid Response Unit detainees, 60 of whom said they had been severely beaten at some point during their detention and interrogations by the plainclothes police force.

"Detainees were beaten on the joints with batons over the course of several days while handcuffed in stress positions with their hands under their legs," Human Rights Watch said. Police personnel used batons, sticks, glass bottles, bats, metal pipes, padlocks and table legs to beat detainees, it said.

Ugandan police spokeswoman Judith Nabakooba accused Human Rights Watch of exaggerating police conduct. She called the report unfair.

"They interview criminals arrested by RRU and police," she said. "Do you expect a criminal to talk about those who arrested him for wrongdoing? He cannot say anything good about RRU."

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Yet Human Rights Watch take the criminals' statements for granted and publish them in their reports."

Nabakooba said the example cited in the report that RRU officers had shot and killed suspects was because the police were being shot at.

Two former suspects told Human Rights Watch that they were questioned for several days by Americans who introduced themselves as members of the FBI. The Americans apparently attempted to get the suspects to cooperate as FBI informants. When a suspect refused, a Rapid Response Unit officer talked to him.

"He looked at me and said, 'You think your life is important? See what we will do to you.' I felt like they were going to disappear me," the report quoted the suspect as saying.

Human rights groups have said that members of the FBI interrogated suspects in Uganda after twin blasts in July during the World Cup final, an attack that killed 76 people and was claimed by a Somali militant group.

Human Rights Watch said it observed trials in which confessions extracted through torture by the Rapid Response Unit were held as admissible evidence.

Associated Press reporter Godfrey Olukya in Kampala, Uganda, contributed to this report.