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BELIZE

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Head of state: Queen Elizabeth II, represented by Colville Young

Head of government: Said Musa

Death penalty: retentionist

International Criminal Court: ratified

UN Women's Convention and its Optional Protocol: ratified

Overview - Covering events from January - December 2005

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There were reports of police abuse and use of excessive force. Eight people remained on death row. Children were subject to a wide range of human rights abuses.

Background

There were strikes and riots in January and April as a result of public anger over the economy.

The government expressed a desire to change the Constitution in order to accept the jurisdiction of the Caribbean Court of Justice as the final court of appeal in Belize, replacing the Privy Council.

Death penalty

One person was sentenced to death in 2005. In 2004 two death sentences were passed, but no executions were carried out. At the end of 2005, eight people were held on death row. There had been no executions since 1985.

Abuses by police

There were several reports of abuses by police, including torture, ill-treatment and arbitrary detention.

- Three men, a father and his two sons, were arrested separately in July, on suspicion of withholding evidence related to a bank robbery. All three were reportedly beaten and subjected to electric shock torture before being released without charge.

Children

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed a number of concerns about abuses of children in Belize in its Concluding Observations issued in 2005, although it acknowledged that the government had made some efforts to remedy the situation. Concerns included: corporal punishment of children; discrimination against vulnerable groups of children; children without birth registration and nationality; the lack of access of non-registered children to services such as education and health; and the generally violent environment in which many Belizean children live.

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