

MAURITIUS

REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

Head of state: Karle Auguste Osma (replaced Cassam Uteem in February)

Head of government: Anerood Jugnauth

Death penalty: abolitionist for all crimes

International Criminal Court: ratified

President Cassam Uteem resigned in February in protest at the government's proposed "anti-terrorist" legislation. At least three people accused police officers of ill-treating them during arrest. Police harassed two human rights activists.

'Anti-terrorist' legislation

Opposition parties, civil society groups and AI expressed concern at provisions of the government's proposed "anti-terrorist" legislation which fail to meet international human rights standards. The legislation allows the police to detain "terrorism" suspects incommunicado for 36 hours and gives the government the right to extradite or deny them asylum and to return them to countries where they risk human rights abuses.

Torture and ill-treatment

At least three people alleged torture or ill-treatment by police officers. They complained to the police Complaints Investigation Bureau or the National Human Rights Commission but, despite investigations into these and previous cases (including suspect deaths in custody), no police officers were brought to justice.

☞ On 22 April, 17-year-old Kevin Besage filed a complaint alleging that members of the Special Supporting Unit beat him in Roche-Bois and in the nearby police station of Abercrombie. The Complaints Investigation Bureau opened an investigation and the complainant identified three suspected police officers, but no further information was made public by the end of the year.

Human rights activists

Police harassed two people because of their human right activities.

☞ Two members of *Parti Lalit*, a non-governmental human rights organization, were arrested by police officers in March while they were collecting information about police brutality. The charges against them were subsequently dropped.

AI country reports/visits

Reports

- Mauritius: Anti-terrorist legislation must not undermine fundamental human rights (AI Index: AFR 39/001/2002)
- Policing to protect human rights: A survey of police practice in countries of the Southern African Development Community (AI Index: AFR 03/004/2002)