

Ref.: TG. AMR.51/38/2007

Chief Phillip D. Morse, Sr  
United States Capitol Police  
119 D Street, NE  
Washington DC 20510  
USA

19 September 2007

Dear Chief Phillip D. Morse, Sr.,

As you may know, Amnesty International is a worldwide, independent and impartial organization that seeks to protect and promote international standards on human rights.

I am writing to express the organization's concern about an incident involving United States Capitol Police that took place on September 15<sup>th</sup> in Congress. According to information, including a video, received by Amnesty International, Reverend Lennox Yearwood, President of the Hip Hop Caucus, was stopped from entering a joint hearing of two House committees for reportedly jumping the queue. After a spoken exchange between the officers and the Reverend, the video shows several police officers forcing him to the ground, with other officers using their weight to keep him pinned on the ground. Reverend Yearwood is clearly heard telling the officers, "I am not resisting." He reportedly sustained a number of injuries as a result of the police use of force.

Given that in the preceding exchange, the Reverend did not appear to be threatening violence, or taking an aggressive stance towards the officers, and that once on the ground did not appear to resist arrest, Amnesty International is concerned that the level of force employed by the officers was excessive and disproportionate to the threat posed by Reverend Yearwood.

Amnesty International acknowledges the responsibilities officers have for ensuring adequate security for such events. However, international standards require that law enforcement officers should resort to force only when strictly necessary and that force should be proportionate to the threat posed and designed to minimize damage or injury. These standards are contained under the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement officials, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) in 1979, and the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials adopted by consensus by the Eight UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders in 1990.

We urge you to conduct a full inquiry into police conduct during this incident and would be grateful to be advised of the results. We look forward to hearing from you regarding the above.

Yours sincerely

Susan Lee  
Program Director  
Americas Regional Program