**Human rights experts weigh in on use of deadly force against Osama Bin Laden**

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Osama bin Laden: statement by the UN Special Rapporteurs on summary executions and on human rights and counter-terrorism

GENEVA – The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns, and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Martin Scheinin, have issued the following statement:

“Acts of Terrorism are the antithesis of human rights, in particular the right to life.  In certain exceptional cases, use of deadly force may be permissible as a measure of last resort in accordance with international standards on the use of force, in order to protect life, including in operations against terrorists.  However, the norm should be that terrorists be dealt with as criminals, through legal processes of arrest, trial and judicially decided punishment.

Actions taken by States in combating terrorism, especially in high profile cases, set precedents for the way in which the right to life will be treated in future instances.

In respect of the recent use of deadly force against Osama bin Laden, the United States of America should disclose the supporting facts to allow an assessment in terms of international human rights law standards. For instance it will be particularly important to know if the planning of the mission allowed an effort to capture Bin Laden.

It may well be that the questions that are being asked about the operation could be answered, but it is important to get this into the open.”

*The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Christof Heyns, is Professor of Human Rights Law at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, and Co-director of the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa. He is a former dean of the Faculty of Law and a former Director of the Centre for Human Rights at the same university. He has engaged in wide-reaching initiatives on human rights in Africa. He has advised a number of international, regional and national entities on human rights issues. Learn more, log on to:*[*http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/executions/index.htm*](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/executions/index.htm)

*Martin Scheinin was appointed Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism by the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights in August 2005. The mandate was last renewed by the Human Rights Council in October 2010. As Special Rapporteur, he is independent from any Government and serves in his individual capacity. He is Professor of Public International Law at the European University Institute in Florence. Learn more, log on to:*[*http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/terrorism/rapporteur/srchr.htm*](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/terrorism/rapporteur/srchr.htm)

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