

ALBANIA: ENDING IMPUNITY FOR TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

Appeal Case: Merita Kola

Merita Kola, aged 22, was arrested on 23 July 2004 on a charge of trafficking for prostitution. In a letter she subsequently sent to the Prosecutor General and the People's Advocate she protested her innocence.

She wrote: "After they arrested me, they took me to Burrel police station, where at 11.30pm I was questioned without a lawyer". She alleged that (named) police officers swore at her, slapped her and kicked her in the stomach until she lost consciousness; they then revived her by pouring water on her. One officer allegedly tore the ear-ring from one of her ears, causing heavy bleeding, and the chief prosecutor of Burrel allegedly threatened her.

Following the publication of her allegations in the newspaper *Gazeta Shqiptare* on 6 August 2004, Merita Kola was released and charges against her were dropped.

Take action now

Please write to the Prosecutor General, with a copy to the Minister of Public Order, the Minister of Justice and the People's Advocate:

In your letters, please include the following points:

- Amnesty International is concerned at reports of the ill-treatment of detainees at police stations in Albania, and at continuing impunity for police officers reasonably suspected of torture and ill-treatment;
- Explain that you are writing in connection with the alleged ill-treatment of Merita Kola, and outline brief details of the case;
- Ask the Prosecutor General to inform you whether his office has opened an investigation into the complaint made by Merita Kola, including the ill-treatment by the named police officers and the threats allegedly made by the chief prosecutor of Burrel;
- Ask to be informed of the outcome of this investigation, including details of any criminal charges brought in connection with this case;
- State that the allegations made by Merita Kola indicate that she may have been subjected to torture, as defined by Article 1 of the UN Convention against Torture, and that accordingly, should it appear that her allegations are founded, those responsible should be prosecuted under Article 86 of the Criminal Code, which criminalises "torture and any other degrading and inhuman acts";
- Remind the prosecutor that all complaints of torture or ill-treatment should be promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigated, and that any police officer reasonably suspected of torture or ill-treatment should be brought to justice;

- Recall that all victims of torture and ill-treatment should have, under the Convention against Torture, to which Albania is a signatory, an enforceable right to compensation, and ask what measures will be taken – if any police officers are convicted – to provide Merita Kola with appropriate compensation.

PLEASE WRITE TO:**Prosecutor General****Z.Theodor Sollaku**Prokurori i Përgjithshëm,
Rruga Qemal Stafa,
Tirana, Republic of Albania**Salutation: Dear Procurator General**

Fax: +355 42 29 085

Minister of Public Order**Z. Igli Toska**Ministri i Rendit Publik
Ministria e Rendit Publik,
Sheshi Skenderbej, Nr.3
Tirana, Republic of Albania**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Fax: + 355 42 58625 (confirmed January 2002)

mrp@mpo.gov.al**Minister of Justice****Z. Fatmir Xhafa**Ministri i Drejtësisë
Ministria e Drejtësisë
Blvd “Zog I”
Tirana, Republic of Albania**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Fax: +355 42 28359

*You could also send a copy to***Ministry of Justice – Directory of Foreign and Public Relations**Ministria e Drejtësisë
Drejtoria e Marreveshjeve Nderkombetare
Blvd “Zog I”
Tirana, Republic of Albania
Tel/Fax: + 355 4 240 444
Email: dmjp@justice.gov.al*If you are sending letters by email, please send them as an attachment.**For copies only: please send by post only***People’s Advocate (Avokati i Popullit) - Ombudsman****Dr Ermir Dobjani**Bulevardi e Deshmoret e Kombit, Nr 3, Kati i II,
Tirana,
Republic of Albania