

November 2001

**FRANCE:  
THE ALLEGED ILL-TREATMENT OF "YACINE" BY  
POLICE OFFICERS**

*Amnesty International is concerned about the alleged ill-treatment by Asnières police officers of "Yacine", a 16-year-old minor. According to reports, "Yacine" claimed that in July 2001 he was severely beaten by police officers at Asnières -sur-Seine police station after being stopped and questioned about a damaged starter motor. He further claimed that he was denied the right to inform a close relative of his detention, and that when he resisted attempts to handcuff him police officers subjected him to a severe beating. Amnesty International welcomes reports that judicial and administrative inquiries were opened into "Yacine's" allegations and is seeking confirmation from the French authorities that thorough and impartial investigations are being conducted, as required by international standards. The organization is also asking for information about the progress and eventual outcome of the investigations, and any further administrative or criminal proceedings arising from them.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup>*Allegations concerning ill-treatment by law enforcement officers should be subject to full, prompt and impartial inquiries-- in line with international standards, including Article 8 of the UN Declaration against Torture and Article 12 of the UN Convention against Torture -- with the methods and findings made public.*

The following account is based mainly on an article from the French newspaper *Libération*.

Following an internal police inquiry by the police inspection service, the *Inspection générale des services* (IGS), the Court of Nanterre has opened an investigation into the alleged ill-treatment of a 16-year-old minor by police officers. At about 5.40p.m. on 10 July 2001 "Yacine" was sitting with a friend, also a minor, in a car at the railway station of Bois-Colombes (Hauts-de-Seine). They were approached and questioned by police officers. "Yacine" told them that they were waiting for the driver, who was paying a family visit nearby. Police officers noted that the starter motor was damaged. The two minors, who had no papers, were taken to Asnières police station. According to the report subsequently drawn up by the IGS, "Yacine" resisted attempts to handcuff him and in the struggle, kicked out. "Yacine" denied this, stating that he would have been unable to do so because he was being held at the time by both hands and feet, with his neck trapped by an officer's elbows, while another shouted in his ear. He said he heard laughter around him.

After being handcuffed, "Yacine" reportedly insulted the officers. He was taken into a corridor by the detoxification cells, where he was punched, kicked and kneed; according to a report by the Departmental Board of Public Security - DDSP (*direction départementale de la sécurité publique*) of Hauts-de-Seine he was kneed once in the testicles. Two medical reports referred to the existence of numerous haematoma - on the back, thigh and wrist - and to many bruises on the face.

Contrary to the law, and despite repeated requests by "Yacine", his mother was not immediately informed that he was being held in police custody. His mother later said that the police had told them he had given a false address. Eventually an officer had called to tell her that

“Yacine” would be released the following day, but refused to allow her to see him. Shortly afterwards she was reportedly astonished when a police lieutenant asked her to attend the Beaujon Hospital in Tenon as a matter of urgency to sign a form authorizing surgery on her son. She was told by doctors that if “Yacine” was not operated upon urgently he risked the loss of both testicles.

Discrepancies were noted in relation to the time at which the ill-treatment allegedly occurred at Asnières police station.

According to the prosecutor attached to the Court of Nanterre (*Parquet de Nanterre*) it took place between 6.05pm and 6.20pm. Police station records, on the other hand, state that police custody was registered at 6.45p.m. and that “Yacine” complained of pain in his testicles at 6.50p.m. His mother was not called until 7.40p.m., by which time “Yacine” had already been taken to hospital.

According to the DDSP, following surgery “Yacine” was transferred to the psychiatric hospital of Sainte-Anne because he had reacted violently on waking from the anaesthetic. He was subsequently allowed home.

*Note: In June 2000 the French Parliament approved a law on the “protection of the presumption of innocence and rights of victims”. The new measures included the introduction, from June 2001, of video recording of police interrogation of minors, with the aim of preventing brutality against children being held in police custody.*

Anyone wishing further details relating to Amnesty International’s concerns in France should consult the following recent publication:  
*Amnesty International Concerns in Europe: January - June 2001 (AI Index: EUR 01/033/2001)*

