

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Greece: Immigrantion control-Human rights abuses against Albanians**

Amnesty International is concerned by a persisting pattern of ill-treatment of Albanians suspected of being undocumented immigrants by Greek police officers and soldiers.

Shpetim Shabani (28) from Lushnja district in Albania, who says that he was legally in Greece, was arrested on 10 November in the town of Agrinio. In a statement to Albanian border police on 12 November, he alleged that three Greek police officers, dressed in camouflage uniforms, entered the bar where he was drinking coffee, asked to see his papers, and then, in public view beat him with their guns, kicked and punched him. He was then taken to a police station, where he was held for two days, before being forcibly returned to Albania. Three days later, the bruises on his body were still reportedly visible, and his left shoulder was very painful.

Two other men gave written statements to the Albanian police alleging ill-treatment. Albert Prifti, from Kucova district, and Vetiak Mane from Lushnja district, alleged that they were beaten by border guards or soldiers on border duties, after being arrested as they attempted clandestinely to enter Greece on foot. Another young man, Lisian Telhaj, also from Lushnja district, who claimed to be legally employed in Athens, told journalists that he too had been beaten by police after his arrest near the Greek-Albanian border.

These incidents follow upon the tragic death in September of Vullnet Bytyci (18) from Has district in Albania, about whom Amnesty International wrote earlier to the Greek authorities. He was fatally shot by a Greek border guard on the evening of 23 September 2003 while attempting to enter Greece clandestinely. He was not armed. According to press reports, the guard was arrested but released several days later pending investigation on a charge of "reckless homicide". In the same letter, Amnesty International raised six other cases said to have taken place in the week from 15 to 22 September 2003 involving Albanian citizens who alleged that they had been brutally beaten by border-guards after being arrested. One of these, Gori Halili (46) from Elbasan district, who had been working in the village of Kalithea, alleged that he was beaten, kicked and robbed by guards serving on the Greek-Albanian border near Krystallopigi, before being returned to Albania. On his return he was admitted to hospital where he was found to have suffered a ruptured spleen, and had to undergo an operation for its removal. Another man, Rrahman Pashollari, who alleged that he had been similarly detained and ill-treated by border guards, sustained a fractured rib. At least two further such incidents have been reported in October and early November.

Amnesty International has called on the Greek authorities to instruct police and soldiers on border guard duties to limit the use of firearms to situations involving imminent threat of death or serious injury, in line with international standards. It emphasized that torture and ill-treatment are absolutely

prohibited by international human rights treaties ratified by Greece and by Greek domestic law. The organisation calls for all such incidents and allegations of ill-treatment to be promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigated, and for those responsible to be brought to justice, and the victims granted compensation.

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