

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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EXTRA 09/94 Health concern / Ill-treatment

14 February 1994

CROATIA D_ernal MURATOVI_, aged 36

Amnesty International is concerned for the health of D_ernal Muratovi_ who is currently in police custody in the town of Po_ega (formerly Slavonska Po_ega) in northern Croatia. He was arrested in his home town of Slavonski Brod on 7 February 1994 and was allegedly severely beaten during interrogation over the next two days. On 11 February, a police doctor visited him in detention and reportedly confirmed injuries consistent with beating, including damage to the kidneys and a burst ear-drum. He recommended a full medical inspection and immediate treatment. It seems that D_ernal Muratovi_'s relatives and lawyer have not been allowed to arrange for their own doctor to examine him.

D_ernal Muratovi_, a Muslim, was born in Bosnia-Herzegovina but has lived in Croatia for many years and obtained Croatian citizenship after the country's independence. He is a lorry owner-driver by profession and recently has been driving for a Muslim charity operating in Croatia which has been taking humanitarian aid into Bosnia-Herzegovina. He was arrested on 7 February, apparently on suspicion of car stealing, together with a Croatian neighbour who was towing D_ernal Muratovi_'s car which had broken down. The neighbour was released after a few hours. D_ernal Muratovi_'s wife was also brought in for questioning on the first day of his detention and was released after several hours. She and a lawyer have subsequently had access to D_ernal Muratovi_.

On 10 February D_ernal Muratovi_ was transferred from Slavonski Brod to another police station in Djakovo and then to the station in Po_ega. There are no further allegations of ill-treatment, but Amnesty International is concerned that D_ernal Muratovi_ is in need of urgent medical attention.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since 1992 the small minority of people of the Muslim nationality (as defined in the constitution of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) has been added to by many thousands of Muslim refugees from the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The pre-1992 Muslim minority in Croatia was composed both of people born in the republic and those born in other republics of the former Yugoslavia (mainly Bosnia-Herzegovina). Croatia already had hundreds of thousands of displaced Croats from the war in 1991. Many Croatian refugees have also arrived from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Although there were already existing tensions, the breakdown in the alliance between the Bosnian Croat forces and mainly Muslim-Bosnian Government forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina in Spring 1993 put members of the Muslim minority and Muslim refugees in a very difficult situation in Croatia. Animosity towards the Muslims on the part of some members of the Croatian public has not been helped by some reported statements by the Croatian authorities, in which they implied that the hospitality might be withdrawn.

Muslim males have for some time been subject to systematic police operations looking for men with irregular status in Croatia (males are not normally given refugee status in Croatia). Many men were forcibly returned to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Men with residence established in Croatia before 1992

are known to have been picked up in some checks. Some of those arrested up are alleged to have been ill-treated by police or soldiers.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams, faxes and airmail letters either in English/German/French or in your own language:

- stating that Amnesty International is concerned at allegations that D_imal Muratovi_ was severely beaten in the police station in Slavonski Brod after his arrest on 7 February 1994 and is apparently in need of urgent medical attention;
- calling for a doctor nominated by his representatives to be given immediate access to him and for him to be transferred to hospital for treatment if the doctor recommends this;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release from police custody if he is not to be charged with any internationally recognised criminal offence;
- urging that an independent and impartial investigation be started immediately to investigate the allegations of ill-treatment and that those suspected of responsibility be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO

1. (Minister of Internal Affairs)

Mr Ivan Jarnjak

Ministar

Ministarstvo za unutrašnje poslove Republike Hrvatske

Savska cesta 39

41000 Zagreb, Croatia

Telegrams: Minister of Internal Affairs, Ivan Jarnjak, Zagreb, Croatia

Faxes: +385 41 443 715

Salutation: Dear Minister

2. (Station commander, police station, Po_ega)

Šef Policijske Postaje

Matije Gupca 6

55300 Po_ega, Croatia

Telegrams: Šef policijske postaje, Po_ega, Croatia

Faxes: +385 55 72 220

Salutation: Dear Commander

3. (President of the Republic of Croatia)

Dr Franjo Tuđman

Predsjednik Republike Hrvatske

Visoka 22

41000 Zagreb, Croatia

Telegrams: President Tuđman, Zagreb, Croatia

Faxes: +385 41 444 532

Salutation: Dear President

COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of Croatia accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 14 March 1994.