

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 40/93 Fear for safety

17 February 1993

YUGOSLAVIA: Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo province in the Republic of Serbia

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Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of ethnic Albanians who have reportedly been severely ill-treated in their homes by police carrying out arms searches or, following these searches, in police custody. These incidents appear to be increasingly frequent with particular villages being selected by police for raids.

Ethnic Albanians have complained that in addition to physically ill-treating (usually beating) men, police have terrorized women and children and have deliberately destroyed furniture and possessions in the course of searches. Although illegal weapons have sometimes been discovered, ethnic Albanians claim that in most cases only legally owned guns have been found. The owners of these have sometimes been forced to hand them over to police. There have even been reported cases in which ethnic Albanians, faced with demands, have purchased weapons to hand over to police, in the hope of thus avoiding further ill-treatment and harassment. Ethnic Albanians claim that the aim of these searches is not so much to find weapons as to intimidate. They have additionally complained that the local Serbian and Montenegrin minorities have been openly armed by members of the large Serbian police and military forces in Kosovo. Their fears have been further exacerbated after local Serbs in December 1992 elected to the Serbian parliament eljko Ra\_natovi\_ (known by the *nom de guerre* "Arkan"). He is the leader of a Serbian paramilitary force which has operated both in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and which has frequently been mentioned in connection with atrocities committed in these conflicts.

Amnesty International has received numerous reports of ethnic Albanians being ill-treated by police during arms searches. The following occurred in the first week of February 1993, when "arms searches" took place in villages in the Pe\_, Vitina, De\_ane and Klina areas. They were reported in the local Albanian-language press.

1 February: Dervish Berisha from the village of alapek was arrested and taken to a police station in Pe\_ where he was beaten and otherwise ill-treated for several hours. Upon release, police officers ordered him to report back to the police station on 3 February and to bring them a gun. This was allegedly the sixth time that Dervish Berisha had been arrested in recent months by police searching for weapons.

3 February : Police searched the homes of members of the Matallari family in the village of Gušica. At the home of Enver Matallari they found a revolver and an obsolete gun (date of manufacture 1926). They arrested Enver and his 72-year-old father Ramiz and took them to the police station in Vitina where they were both beaten.

4 February: Jeton Berisha (aged 14) was beaten in the police station in Klina and forced to state that his father possessed arms.

5 February: Police carried out arms searches in the village of Gornji Potrc. They arrested the brothers Ymer and Osman Jagoda and took them to the police station in Klina where their hands and the soles of their feet were beaten.

5 Feb: Police searched the house of Asllan Abdyli for arms in the village of Kličina (Pe\_ commune). Three family members, Zymber, Qerim and Lulzim (the latter aged 18) were taken to a police station and beaten so severely that they subsequently required medical treatment.

Page 2 of UA 40/93

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Kosovo province in southern Serbia is inhabited by a largely ethnic Albanian population (accounting for up to 90 per cent of its population). In July 1990 the Serbian parliament suspended the Kosovo parliament after ethnic Albanian members of the Kosovo parliament declared Kosovo independent of the Republic of Serbia. In September 1990 the Republic of Serbia adopted a new constitution which deprived Kosovo province of most of its autonomy. Since then most ethnic Albanians refuse to recognize the legitimacy of Serbian authority in the province. (See also UA 323/92, EUR 70/01/92, 19 October 1992 and UA 406/92, EUR 70/03/92, 22 December 1992.)

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

- expressing concern about frequent reports that police in Kosovo province have systematically beaten or otherwise ill-treated ethnic Albanians in the course of arms searches;
- mentioning some of the above reported cases and noting that these relate to just one week in February, but that there have been many other reports in recent months;
- urging that an impartial investigation be instituted into all such cases and that those found responsible be brought to justice;
- urging that measures be taken to ensure that police officers are informed of and required to implement international standards for law enforcement, in particular those laid down in the United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials. In addition, point out that such standards apply in all cases and under all circumstances and that the fact that some of the victims of ill-treatment may have illegally possessed weapons does not in any way justify the failure to respect these international standards.

#### **APPEALS TO**

1) Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia:

Mr Zoran Sokolovi\_  
Ministar unutrašnjih poslova Republike Srbije  
Kneza Miloša 101  
11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia  
**Faxes: + 38 11 683 041**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

2) President of the Republic of Serbia:

Mr Slobodan Miloševi\_  
Predsednik Republike Srbije  
Srpskih vladara 14  
11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia  
**Faxes: + 38 11 682 167**

**Salutation: Dear President**

3) Premier - President of the Serbian Government:

Mr Nikola Šainovi\_  
Predsednik vlade Republike Srbije  
Nemanjina 11  
11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia  
**Faxes: + 38 11 682 167**

**Salutation: Dear Premier**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Federal Minister for Human Rights and  
Minority Affairs:  
Dr Mom\_ilo Gruba\_  
Bulevar Lenjina 2  
11070 Beograd, Yugoslavia

Committee for the Defence of Human Rights  
and Freedoms, Pristina:  
Xhavit Mitrovica 15  
38000 Pristina, Yugoslavia

and to diplomatic representatives of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 March 1993.