

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 70/04/97

UA 38/97 Fear of ill-treatment / Possible  
extrajudicial executions

3 February 1997

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA  
(KOSOVO Province)

Ethnic Albanians including:  
Avni Klinaku  
Dulah Sallahu  
Bejtullah Sallahu  
Emin Sallahu  
Shukrije Rexha (f), political activist  
Majlinda Sinani (f), school teacher and actress  
Sinan Azemi, human rights activist

Zahir Pajaziti (killed)  
Hakif Zejnullahu (killed)

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Fears for the well-being of scores of ethnic Albanians arrested in Kosovo province in recent days have been heightened by allegations by a released detainee that he was severely ill-treated in police custody. As political violence in the province continues, three ethnic Albanians have been shot dead by police who claim they were acting in self-defence.

Some 50 ethnic Albanians have been arrested since 26 January, apparently on suspicion that they are members of the so-called "Liberation Army of Kosovo" or other allegedly similar organizations. The Liberation Army of Kosovo, about which little is known, has claimed responsibility for a number of assassinations and attacks in 1996 and January 1997 on Serbs and on ethnic Albanians alleged to have "collaborated" with the Serbian authorities.

Police carrying out the arrests claim to have found automatic weapons and explosive devices, as well as plans for further attacks. About 10 of the 50 have since been released. Those detained include Avni Klinaku, Dulah, Bejtullah and Emin Sallahu; a number of women, among them Shukrije Rexha, a member of Kosovo's main ethnic Albanian political party, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), and Majlinda Sinani; some students; and Sinan Azemi, a human rights activist from Uroševac. One of those arrested and subsequently released, Naser Dugolli, has alleged that he was severely ill-treated while in police custody.

On 31 January three ethnic Albanians, Zahir Pajaziti, Hakif Zejnullahu and one other unnamed person, were shot dead by police in Kosovo province. According to a statement by the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs, they were killed after shots were fired at police officers from a car and police retaliated by shooting back. At the time the police officers had been attempting to arrest a man they suspected of being a leader of the Liberation Army of Kosovo.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International does not condone political violence, but is concerned that those detained in this recent wave of arrests may be tortured or otherwise ill-treated. Police ill-treatment of ethnic Albanian detainees is an almost daily phenomenon in Kosovo province; such ill-treatment is liable to be particularly severe in cases where the police suspect the detainee of being a member of an organization involved in political violence and one which has targeted police officers.

In the past detainees suspected of political violence have frequently been detained by police beyond the legal three-day limit before being brought before an investigating magistrate. Detainees' lawyers and families have often had difficulty in obtaining access to them, or even obtaining information as to where they are detained (see EXTRA 153/96, EUR 70/29/96, 2 October 1996, and follow-ups).

The LDK has consistently advocated peaceful means to achieve its aim of independence for Kosovo province. It has recently expressed fears, echoed by other observers, that the Serbian authorities may seek to provoke unrest among ethnic Albanians in Kosovo province in order to divert Serbian and international attention away from opposition demonstrations about the annulment in November of local elections results in the capital, Belgrade, and other major towns.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, French, German or Russian or your own language:**

- noting reports of the arrest and detention since 26 January of some 50 ethnic Albanians in Kosovo province, 10 of whom have been released;
- acknowledging the duty of the authorities to bring to justice any person who has committed violent crimes, but stressing that such investigations must be carried out in conformity with national and international law;
- seeking assurances that those detained are not being subjected to torture or ill-treatment and that they are granted full legal safeguards, including the right to be brought promptly before a judge and to challenge their detention in a court of law, and access to their lawyers and families;
- noting the incident on 31 January in which three ethnic Albanians were shot dead by police, allegedly acting in self-defence;
- urging that this incident be promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigated so as to establish whether or not police acted within the law.

**APPEALS TO:**

President of the Republic of Serbia

Predsednik Republike Srbije

Slobodan Milošević

Andrijevica 1

11000 Beograd, FR Yugoslavia

**Fax: + 381 11 682 167 or 656 862**

**Telegrams: Predsednik Srbije, Beograd, Yugoslavia**

**Salutation: Dear President**

Minister of Internal Affairs

Zoran Sokolović

Ministar unutrašnjih poslova Republike Srbije

Kneza Miloša 101

11000 Beograd, FR Yugoslavia

**Fax: +381 11 641 867 or 11 685 937**

**Telegrams: Ministar unutrašnjih poslova Srbije, Beograd, Yugoslavia**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

Committee for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms

Xhavit Mitrovica 15, 38000, Priština, Yugoslavia

NGO Information Centre

Avalska 9,  
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and to diplomatic representatives of 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 20 March 1997.