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**FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA (KOSOVO PROVINCE): AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS FOR AN END TO VIOLENCE AGAINST POLITICAL DETAINEES**

The Yugoslav authorities should immediately provide the family of Nait Hasani, an ethnic Albanian, with any information they may have concerning his whereabouts, Amnesty International said today.

Nait Hasani has not been seen or heard from since 31 January when he was taken from hospital in Priština in Kosovo province, where according to eyewitnesses he was admitted the day before with severe injuries and placed under police guard following his arrest on 28 January.

“We are extremely concerned about Nait Hasani’s welfare. The police and judicial authorities in Priština reportedly deny any knowledge of him and say that no charges have been brought against him,” Amnesty International said.

From Prizren in the predominantly Albanian-inhabited province of Kosovo, Nait Hasani was one of some 90 ethnic Albanians recently arrested in a crack-down by police seeking those responsible for a series of attacks targeting Serb members of the police force and local Albanians suspected of “collaborating” with the Serb authorities.

The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a clandestine organization about which little is known, has claimed responsibility for these attacks, which have taken place since April 1996. Three ethnic Albanians, allegedly suspected of being KLA members, were shot dead on 31 January by police who claimed to be acting in self-defence.

At least 40 of those arrested have since been released. Many have alleged that during detention they were tortured by police who tried to force them to admit to possessing hidden caches of weapons and to being members of the KLA.

Among those released without charge were 13 men from the village of Komoglava. One of them was Rrahim Sadiku, a journalist, who reports receiving more than 200 truncheon blows before he lost consciousness, as well as being beaten on the soles of his feet and having a police officer stand on his chest, almost suffocating him. He was released with injuries and severe bruises all over his body on 4 February after four days’ detention.

Fevzi Ahmeti is a local leader of the main ethnic Albanian political party, the Democratic League of Kosovo, which has consistently advocated the province’s secession by peaceful means. He was also allegedly beaten and said that police who searched his house for weapons had instead found a typewriter, papers and two UN pamphlets on human rights.

Another man, Ismet Zeqiri, from Priština, who was arrested on 26 January and detained for 24 hours, said that he was beaten so badly by police that he admitted to having a gun which he in fact did not possess.

The ill-treatment alleged by these men is consistent with an alarming pattern of abuse inflicted on political detainees in police custody in Kosovo province which has caused concern for many years. It also raises grave fears about the treatment of those who remain in detention, some of whom have been formally charged with terrorism and with seeking to undermine Yugoslavia's territorial integrity by force.

A lawyer has claimed that police ill-treatment of one of his clients, Alban Neziri, continued even after he had been transferred from police custody into investigative detention. Alban Neziri was allegedly scarcely able to walk as a result of police ill-treatment and had been tortured with electric shocks during questioning on the night of 10-11 February to force him to confess to KLA affiliation.

Another lawyer expressed fears that public protests by lawyers would aggravate police ill-treatment of their clients. He added that his client, who was being held in Pe\_, was critically ill and urinating blood due to injuries he had received while in police custody.

Amnesty International is concerned that courts in Kosovo province frequently have based their verdicts against ethnic Albanians accused of political offences largely on statements which defendants have retracted in court claiming they were untrue and had been obtained by force. Courts have repeatedly failed to investigate these allegations, thus undermining public confidence in their verdicts.

While the organization recognizes the authorities' duty to arrest and prosecute those responsible for acts of violence, this should be done in accordance with international human rights standards, which explicitly ban the use of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in all circumstances.

Amnesty International calls for an end to the torture and ill-treatment of detainees in Kosovo province. The organization urges the immediate release of everyone currently detained for the non-violent exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association, and calls for all others to be granted full legal safeguards, including access to their families and lawyers in accordance with international standards.

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