

EXTERNAL

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Selman Sopa - Kosovo province, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Selman Sopa, aged 41, is an ethnic Albanian from Ka_anik town in Kosovo province. He is a teacher at the "Emin Duraku" primary school in Ka_anik. This school, like many other schools in Kosovo, is financed and organized by the ethnic Albanian community following disputes with the Serbian authorities over the curricula. The authorities regard such schools as illegal, though in practice primary schools run by ethnic Albanians continue to use state school premises.

On 14 and 15 October 1995 Selman Sopa was reportedly severely beaten by police in Ka_anik police station. According to a statement which he gave to a local human rights organization:

"On 13 October 1995 at about 5.30pm I was crossing the road near the police station in Ka_anik (my home is opposite the police station), when a police officer stopped me, asked me for my identification card and took me into the police station. A few minutes later he ordered me to bring my passport saying that a check needed to be carried out. He took my passport and told me to come back the next day at 2pm.

The next day I reported to the police station at 2pm and the same officer asked me what kind of gun I had. I replied that, apart from military service when I had on two occasions cleaned a gun with the help of friends, I had never had a gun or had need of one. He threatened me, telling me that I did have a gun and that I would have to produce one. I again replied that I did not need a gun and asked him why he insisted on this. Later he began to beat my face and hands and then the soles of my feet, injuring them. [Afterwards] he told me to go home and to come again the next day. I asked him why he beat me and told him I would come [the next day] but that I did not have a gun. I was told I must report back the next day or they would come and take other members of my family.

The following day, Sunday 15 October 1995, I reported to the police station at about 2pm. Three police officers began to kick me and beat me with rubber truncheons all over my body and after a while I almost lost consciousness. Each time they struck me they swore at me and at the Albanian nation in the most shameful and intolerable manner, and threatened to kill me. They told me to tell them about the work of the school and what secret activity was going on, things I knew nothing about. They asked me why I would not tell them who was paying the teachers' salaries. All their talk and their curses I heard in a state of agony, for the beating was so severe that I cannot describe it. They repeated the same things after throwing a bucket of water over my face, for I had lost consciousness. They sent me into another room where I stayed until 4.30pm or 5pm, then they threw me out telling me to come back the next day at 7am.

I slowly made my way home, which is nearby, and my brother and a friend took me to a surgery and later to the hospital in Priština where I remained until today [17 October 1995]. When I was told that I must either pay the costs of treatment or leave the hospital, since I did not have the

money with me I decided to leave the hospital and as evidence I have the certificate issued by the hospital.”

A certificate issued by the Orthopedic Clinic of Priština hospital confirms that Selman Sopa was admitted as a patient to the the Orthopedic Clinic from 15 October 1995 to 17 October 1995. It also records the following diagnosis: *Bruising of the body and head, bruising and swelling on the back, both hands and buttocks.*

Amnesty International's concern: Amnesty International is concerned that Selman Sopa was beaten and otherwise ill-treated at Ka_anik police station on 14 and 15 October 1995 by police officers and is calling for a full and impartial investigation into the incident. The organization is further calling for those responsible to be brought to justice. Both Yugoslav law and international human rights treaties which the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia recognizes as legally binding (in particular the *United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* ratified by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991) prohibit torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Background

In 1990 and 1991 the Serbian authorities introduced uniform curricula throughout the whole of the Republic of Serbia and abolished Kosovo province's educational authority. The total number of enrolments in secondary Albanian-language schools was drastically reduced and a considerable number of educational institutions were closed. Many subjects at Priština University were no longer taught in the Albanian language but only in Serbian. More than 18,000 ethnic Albanian teachers and other staff in Albanian-language schools and the university who refused to recognize these changes and follow the new curricula were dismissed. Instead they created a “parallel” educational system, using the old curricula, and secondary school classes began to be held in private homes. Ethnic Albanian primary school children continue to use state school premises, but these are financed and run by the ethnic Albanian community.

The issue of education has thus become one of the key points of confrontation in Kosovo. The Serbian authorities have systematically harassed those involved in the educational process, including members of the teachers' trade union, teachers, university lecturers, private citizens who have made their homes available for teaching and even pupils themselves. Schools have been broken into and raided, teachers arrested and/or beaten and lessons repeatedly interrupted.

In August 1993, the Humanitarian Law Fund, a human rights organization based in Belgrade, published a report on human rights violations in Kosovo province and concluded: "The investigation conducted by the Humanitarian Law Fund in the latter half of June 1993 indicates that the authorities of the Republic of Serbia, since the suspension and abolition of the Kosovo educational system, apply different forms of pressure and coercion against all those taking part in, or supporting, the autonomous Albanian schooling system". Other independent observers have come to similar conclusions.