

ROMANIA

@ Excessive use of firearms by Romanian police

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S CONCERN:

*Amnesty International is concerned that Romanian police officers reportedly shot and injured Mihai Ciobanu in circumstances not warranting the use of firearms. Moreover, the case of Mihai Ciobanu is similar to other incidents of police shootings that have recently occurred leading Amnesty International to fear that the Romanian police is increasingly resorting to the excessive use of firearms while carrying out their duty. Internationally recognized principles only allow for the use of firearms in situations of self-defence or defence of others, and as a means to prevent a particularly serious crime involving a threat to life. Amnesty International is concerned that the use of firearms in the case of Mihai Ciobanu was not in proportion to the seriousness of the offence or the situation.*

BACKGROUND:

*The information in this case comes from an article published in the Romanian daily Adevărul on 23 September 1995. The newspaper reported that on an unspecified date Mihai Ciobanu, from Gheasa, was caught while trying to steal from a car parked on the Calea Pantelimon in Bucharest. After seeing the police officers, Mihai Ciobanu and "his accomplices" (the article does not mention how many) started to run away. The police officers then fired several warning shots in the air, and subsequently five bullets at the suspects. Three bullets hit Mihai Ciobanu in the left thigh and foot. Following extensive medical treatment he was not charged with any criminal offence.*

*Amnesty International has received several reports describing similar shootings. In most of these, the victims of the shooting were caught in the act of stealing goods or cars and, upon seeing the police, started to run away. The police officers then fired warning shots and subsequently fired shots at the running men, injuring some of them. In at least one incident this year a man was shot dead by the police. (According to Amnesty International's information, only in one case the victim was armed and reportedly tried to attack a police officer.)*

*Amnesty International is asking the Romanian authorities to be informed of the outcome of investigations made by competent military prosecutors into the use of firearms in these incidents. The organization has also urged the authorities to instruct the police forces and other law enforcement forces to refrain from using firearms unless this is warranted by the situation.*