
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 274/94

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INTERNAL

NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - KOSOVO

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

Afghanistan - 15 December - SEE NEWS SERVICE 267

Change of plan: News item about the UN ignoring recommendations by Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan last week and giving new info on appalling human rights situation in Afghanistan. There will not be a document to go with this - instead will be a sheet with some detailed cases. These materials will come in the news service by 12 December at the latest.

Bosnia - (21 December) - possible change - SEE NEWS SERVICE 268

Sudan - 25 January - SUDAN CAMPAIGN VIDEO INFORMATION (please inform AV officers and campaign coordinators):

SUDAN: A NATION SCARRED - Soldiers led by Omer Hassan Ahmad al Bashir seized power in Sudan in June 1989. Sweeping away a democratically elected government, the new rulers promised a revolution of "national salvation". What they delivered is a human rights disaster. From the streets of the capital Khartoum to remote rural villages, the human rights of Sudanese people are being abused.

The Sudan campaign video has now been completed and is available in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and international versions. An order form with full details and transcript will be sent out next week, but to speed up the ordering process, we are suggesting that your section sends their order to the Audiovisual Resources team at the IS by fax or e-mail in the next two weeks stating which language and video format you require. SEE NEWS SERVICE 261

Turkey - 8 February - SEE NEWS SERVICE 261

Northern Iraq - 28 February - SEE NEWS SERVICE 266

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

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KOSOVO: CALL FOR PROTECTION FROM TORTURE OF FORMER POLICE FORCE PERSONNEL

Amnesty International is calling on the Yugoslav authorities to make sure that more than 150 ethnic Albanian former police force employees, arrested during the past two weeks in Kosovo province in the south of Serbia, are safeguarded against torture or ill-treatment.

The human rights organization is receiving almost daily reports of more arrests and torture allegations from the lawyers of former police officers or other employees of the Ministry of the Interior.

Those arrested were dismissed from their posts or resigned after refusing to accept and recognize measures introduced by the Serbian Government in 1990, which effectively abolished the province's autonomy.

On 23 November Amnesty International learned that one of those arrested, Ramadan Ndrecaj, former chief of police in Suva Reka, had been so severely ill-treated in Prizren police station that he had been admitted, under police guard, to hospital for treatment.

Lawyers have reported that others, including Shaban Dana and Ylmet Fondaj in Prizren, and Blerim Olloni in Priština, have been tortured and physically ill-treated and have called on the international community to ensure that legal proceedings be conducted according to the law. They said that the aim of ill-treatment was to force detainees to make self-incriminating statements.

Other former police officers are reportedly being hunted down by police and in some cases, when they cannot be found, their wives or other family members have been arrested as hostages until they turn themselves in.

The former police officers have apparently been arrested on suspicion of creating paramilitary forces with the aim of obtaining Kosovo's secession from Yugoslavia. Earlier this year a number of ethnic Albanians were convicted on similar charges in Kosovo; they denied they had planned armed uprising and argued that if they had made plans or obtained weapons it was for the purpose of self-defence in case the conflict in former Yugoslavia should spread to Kosovo province.

In February this year Amnesty International issued a report condemning the frequent use of torture or other ill-treatment by police to extract self-incriminating statements from defendants. Such confessions have been used to convict them in court - often with little or no corroborative evidence and despite the fact that the defendants had withdrawn these statements alleging they had been obtained by force.

In its report, Amnesty International urged that courts do not accept evidence alleged to have been obtained through torture or ill-treatment unless there has been a thorough investigation of such allegations to establish their veracity.

As the arrests and allegations continue, Amnesty International is urging the Yugoslav authorities to immediately investigate the allegations of torture and ill-treatment. They should make sure that all those arrested are given legal protection in accordance with international human rights standards, including safeguards against torture and ill-treatment. ENDS/

* Amnesty International's February report is entitled: "Yugoslavia: Ethnic Albanians - Trial by truncheon", AI Index: EUR 70/01/94.