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Albania: Remzi Hoxha – justice delayed and denied

In 1995, Remzi Hoxha, an Albanian businessman from Macedonia disappeared in Albania. On 22 November, the Serious Crimes Court in Tirana convicted three former members of Albanian's security services (SHIK) for their part in his detention and the subsequent torture which killed him, and for the detention and torture of two other men, Ziso Kristopulli and Avdyl Loshaj.

However, Amnesty International regrets that the court ruling failed to bring full justice to Remzi Hoxha's family.

Former senior SHIK agent Ilir Kumbaro, was sentenced – in his absence - to 15 years' imprisonment for torturing Remzi Hoxha, and causing his death. However, Ilir Kumbaro remains at large after fleeing extradition proceedings in London in December 2011.

Co-defendants Avni Koldashi and Arben Sefgjini were found guilty of 'arbitrary acts' and 'deprivation of freedom'. However, as these offences were amnestied in 1997, the judge ruled that the 1997 amnesty should apply to them and the case against them be dismissed.

The result of this ruling is that all three defendants remain free. One of the defendants – Arben Sefgjini – was appointed in 2009 to a senior post in the Ministry of Justice, as head of the national Probation Service, at a time when he was still being prosecuted for his participation in these most serious crimes - a post he continues to occupy.

Amnesty International notes the extraordinarily prolonged proceedings in Albania, which have delayed justice for Remzi Hoxha's family. The organization also regrets that the British courts and authorities failed to ensure that Ilir Kumbaro was duly extradited – he had been granted bail, but an electronic tagging measure had been lifted, enabling him to leave his home unnoticed and go into hiding.

These failings have ultimately denied Remzi Hoxha's family justice and reparations. Further, his family have still not been informed of where Remzi Hoxha's body may be found, so that they may be able to recover his remains, and bury them. The organization notes that Bashkim Gazidede, head of the SHIK in 1995, who denied all knowledge of this case, died in 2008.

Amnesty International has campaigned for many years on Remzi Hoxha's case, calling on the Albanian authorities to clarify his fate and to bring to justice those responsible for his disappearance. After 18 years, the Hoxha family deserves to know the truth about what happened.

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