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USSR

Killings in Lithuania

Amnesty International is concerned at reports that up to 13 peaceful, unarmed demonstrators were killed by Soviet troops the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius on 13 January 1990.

Several thousand Lithuanians had gathered outside the city's television centre in an attempt to forestall moves by Soviet troops to take over the building. According to eyewitness accounts from journalists and demonstrators, tanks and soldiers using tear gas and live ammunition moved against the unarmed crowd in order to take control of the building in the early hours of 13 January 1990. Initial reports from the Lithuanian Ministry of Health spoke of 13 people killed and over 100 injured in the operation. The dead are said to include an elderly woman and a 13-year-old girl with gunshot wounds, and at least two people crushed by military vehicles. In a television appearance later that day the USSR Minister of Internal Affairs, Boris Pugo, claimed that demonstrators had fired first and that one soldier had been killed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Baltic republic of Lithuania was an independent state between the two world wars, but was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940. Republican elections in February 1990 brought to power a government committed to recovering the country's previous status. However, a conflict has arisen with the central Soviet authorities who do not recognize the Lithuanian declaration of independence issued in March 1990 and insist that Soviet laws continue to take precedence. One area of tension has been conscription, with many young Lithuanians refusing to perform compulsory military service in what they consider to be an army of occupation. On 7 January 1990 the USSR Defence Ministry announced that it was to use troops to enforce the draft. On 8 January soldiers began to move into Vilnius, and the following day Lithuania's president, Vytautas Landsbergis, urged people to rally in the capital in support of the government. Seven people were reportedly injured, one by gunfire, after several buildings were seized by soldiers on 11 January. Demonstrators had gathered outside the television station after reports that troops intended to occupy it.

Amnesty International is seeking further information on the circumstances of the deaths, and is calling on the Soviet government to initiate a full investigation and make the findings public.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telexes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at reports that up to 13 unarmed, peaceful demonstrators were killed by Soviet soldiers in Vilnius on 13 January 1990;
- urging a full and impartial investigation into the circumstances of these deaths, and that the findings be made public;
- calling on the authorities to ensure that law enforcement officials are aware of, and conform to, international standards regarding the use of force.

APPEALS TO**Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachov, president of the USSR**

SSSR, RSFSR

Moskva

Kreml

Prezidentu Gorbachovu M.S.

TELEGRAMS: SSSR, Moskva, Kreml, Prezidentu Gorbachovu**Marshal Dmitry Timofeyevich Yazov, Minister of Defence of the USSR**

SSSR, RSFSR

103160 Moskva

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Ministerstvo oborony SSSR

Ministru marshalu Yazovu D.T.

TELEGRAMS: SSSR, Moskva, ul. Kirova 37, Ministerstov oborony, Ministru Yazovu**Boris Pugo, Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR**

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ul. Ogaryova, 6

Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del SSSR

Ministru Pugo B.K.

TELEGRAMS: SSSR, Moskva, ul. Ogaryova, 6, MVD SSSR, Ministru Pugo**Nikolay Semyonovich Trubin, The Procurator-General of the USSR**

SSSR, RSFSR

103793 Moskva

ul. Pushkinskaya, 15a

Prokuratura SSSR

Generalnomu prokuroru Trubinu N.S.

TELEGRAMS: SSSR, Moskva, ul. Pushkinskaya 15a, Prokuratura SSSR, Generalnomu prokuroru Trubinu**COPIES TO:****Vytautas Landsbergis, president of Lithuania**

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USSR

**Yury A. Reshetov, Head of the Human Rights Department at
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Upravlenie po gumanitarnomu
sotrudnichestvu i pravam cheloveka
Ministerstva inostrannykh del SSSR
Nachalniku Reshetovu Yu.A.

and to the Soviet diplomatic representation in your
country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the
International Secretariat or your section office if
sending appeals after 25 February 1991.