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Montenegro: Police must cooperate with criminal investigations into use of excessive force and ill-treatment of protestors

Amnesty International is calling on the Minister of Interior to ensure that law enforcement officers, including police commanders and the Anti-Terrorist Unit, fully cooperate with criminal investigations into allegations of ill-treatment and the excessive use of force during public demonstrations in the capital, Podgorica, in October 2015.

At least 26 people, including some by-standers are known to have sought medical treatment after sustaining injuries on 24 October. Another four were injured on 17 October. Their injuries included severe bruising as a result of beatings by law enforcement officers, or injuries sustained as a result of tear gas, rubber bullets and other less-lethal weapons deployed by the police.

As far as the organization is aware, only two law enforcement officers have been charged with any offence. On 11 November two members of the Anti-Terrorist Unit were charged with the torture of Miodrag Martinović – who had not taken part in the protests. However, video footage, shows over 20 police officers crowding around his car and beating him with batons. The Council of Civil Control of the Police, in a preliminary report found that Miodrag Martinović was “subjected to torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, during which he was severely injured and his vehicle destroyed”.

In a letter sent to the authorities, Amnesty International expressed strong concerns about incidents of beatings and other forms of excessive use of force against protestors and others, including by-standers, during the mass protests organized by the Democratic Front, particularly on 24 October 2015.

Amnesty International highlighted concerns in six cases, involving eight victims, based on first hand-observations reported by credible local nongovernmental organizations, and in some cases, the preliminary findings of the Council for Civil Control of the Police. The organization also reviewed testimonies provided by the victims, medical records, and photographs of their injuries and video footage of some of the alleged ill-treatment.

Amnesty International also expressed concern that the force deployed by the Ministry of Interior Police, including members of the Special Anti-Terrorist unit, was neither proportionate nor necessary for the achievement of a legitimate objective or to ensure public peace and order.

In the letter sent to the authorities, Amnesty International urged the Ministry of Interior and the Police Directorate to review the operational procedures and practice of the security forces of Montenegro in relation to the use of force and firearms in the light of the international human rights standards as established in the UN Basic Principles for the Use of Force and Firearms.

The organization stressed that the use of force should only be used when other non-violent means remain ineffective, and that law enforcement officials should exercise restraint, minimize damage and injury, and protect uninvolved as well as non-violent persons.

In addition, Amnesty International drew attention to concerns about the arrest and detention of two journalists, Dražen Živković and Gojko Raičević, (the latter alleged that he was subsequently beaten in police custody), while they were reporting on the dismantling of the tented protest outside the parliament on 17 October.

Public Document

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