

9 January 2001

AI Index ASA 22/001/2001 - News Service Nr. 6

Japan: Yugoslav national faces death following ill-treatment and lack of medical attention in prison

The life of a criminal suspect in Osaka prison is in grave danger after months of reported force-feeding, ill-treatment and harsh conditions, Amnesty International said today calling on authorities to ensure he receives adequate medical attention.

"This man's plight highlights long-standing concerns about the Japanese prison system," Amnesty International said. "Everyone should be treated humanely, whatever crime they have committed."

Thirty-six year old Yugoslav national, Zdravko Radonjic, was arrested for shoplifting in June 2000 and was allegedly beaten by prison guards after complaining about harsh prison conditions. He was not allowed to see his family or contact the Yugoslav embassy until August.

Zdravko Radonjic has been on a hunger strike since June and force-fed via a nasal drip since August. He has dropped over 40 kilograms in weight and needs help to walk. Despite his deteriorating condition, Zdravko Radonjic was only transferred to hospital this week.

Prison conditions in Japan are notoriously harsh. In October, Zdravko Radonjic said that he was punched and kicked until he lost consciousness after he complained about not being allowed to send a letter to his family. His legal representation has also been inadequate due to communication problems.

Amnesty International is calling on the Ministry of Justice to ensure Zdravko Radonjic receives medical treatment in a civilian hospital and is given adequate legal representation.

The authorities should also launch an inquiry into his alleged ill-treatment and inadequate medical treatment which led to the serious deterioration in his health. The results of the investigation should be made public and those responsible for denying Zdravko Radonjic his human rights should be held to account.

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>