

EXTERNAL

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ALBANIA

@Police ill-treatment of Gentian GJOLENA

The only information so far available to Amnesty International (AI) in this case comes from a brief report in the Albanian daily Koha Jonë of 20 June 1995. According to this report, Gentian Gjolena has filed criminal charges against three policemen who, he claims, brutally beat him while he was taken into custody in Elbasan on 29 May 1995. Following his arrest, he was detained at a police station in Elbasan, but was released later on the same day. He claims that the police arrested him without cause and released him only after his brother paid a large bribe to the officers who had arrested him. Gentian Gjolena has a medical certificate describing the nature of his injuries, and has pressed criminal charges against the three police officers. He is quoted in the Koha Jonë article as saying: "Now the police have offered me a million (leks) to withdraw my charges, but I am not going to do so, because I was humiliated and beaten in public although I had done nothing wrong".

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There have been numerous allegations of police abuses reported in the Albanian press in recent years. In 1994, at least seven people are reported to have died as a result of being shot by police or from ill-treatment in police custody.

In a statement published at the beginning of October 1994 the Albanian Helsinki Committee noted that "Reports of excesses by police officers are constantly reaching our Committee...[The Committee] is aware of disciplinary and punitive measures which the competent authorities have taken in some cases of this kind. However, we are obliged to note that the response [by the authorities] has been inadequate and absolutely disproportionate to the scale of this phenomenon. We call for this problem to be resolutely tackled and for more effective measures to be taken against those officers who instead of defending the law gravely violate it."

For further background information, please refer to Amnesty International's report, *Albania: Failure to end police ill-treatment and deaths in custody* (AI Index: EUR 11/04/95) issued in June 1995.

Reason for Amnesty International concern

Amnesty International is concerned about allegations that police ill-treated Gentian Gjolena, thereby violating article 7 of the International Covenant

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on Civil and Political Rights, - to which Albania is a State Party -

forbidding torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. Amnesty International is urging the Albanian authorities to instigate an independent and impartial investigation into the circumstances of the incident and is also urging that any police officials responsible for the ill-treatment of Gentian Gjolena be brought to justice.