

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 11/07/96

21 March 1996

Further information (2) on UA 50/96 (EUR 11/03/96, 28 February 1996) and follow-up EUR 11/04/96, 11 March 1996 - Possible Prisoners of Conscience

ALBANIASulejman Rrahman Mekollari
Dilaver Ibrahim Dauti
Lirim Servet Veliu
Gani Koro (correct spelling)

According to official Albanian news reports, on 17 March 1996, the Saranda district court convicted all four defendants of anti-constitutional activity. Sulejman Mekollari was sentenced to four years' imprisonment, Dilaver Dauti to two years' imprisonment and Lirim Veliu to six months' imprisonment. They remain in detention pending appeal. Gani Koro received a suspended prison sentence.

Defence lawyers at the trial reportedly argued that the leaflets the accused allegedly distributed in September 1995, which apparently referred to Dr Sali Berisha without citing his title as President of Albania, and which demanded "Out with the Americans", were not anti-constitutional in content. The lawyer defending Sulejman Mekollari, who was accused of "recreating" the Albanian communist party (banned in 1992), reportedly noted that the evidence in support of this charge was based on writings found at Sulejman Mekollari's home in 1992, several months after the party was banned. At the time of the discovery of this material, the "recreation" of the communist party was not a criminal offence under the criminal code then in force. The present criminal code which makes this an offence came into force in June 1995.

Amnesty International is concerned that Sulejman Mekollari, Dilaver Dauti and Lirim Veliu may be prisoners of conscience. The information so far available about the charges against them indicates that they neither used nor advocated the use of violence.

Amnesty International has as yet no further information on the case of Sami Meta and co-defendants or on that of Elvira Shaplllo and co-defendants.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Italian, English or French or in your own language:

- expressing concern about the conviction of the above four men by the district court of Tirana on charges of anti-constitutional activity;
- stating that Amnesty International is well aware of the extremely severe human rights violations committed in Albania under past communist rule;
- noting, however, that in 1991 Albania ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees freedom of expression and association;
- nothing that the available information suggests that these four men, whatever their political beliefs, did not advocate violence and urging therefore that, if this is the case, the three who remain detained be released.

[Concerning the other defendants mentioned in EUR 11/04/96 of 11 March 1996, please continue to send appeals as recommended in that update.]

APPEALS TO:

President of Albania
Dr Sali Berisha

President i Republikës
se Shqiperisë
Tirana, Albania
Faxes: +355 42 33761 or +355 42 28 8420
Telegrams: President Berisha, Tirana, Albania
Salutation: Dear President

Minister of Justice
Mr Hektor Frasheri
Ministria e Drejtësisë
Tirana, Albania
Telegrams: Mr Frasheri Ministria e Drejtësisë, Tirana, Albania
Faxes: +355 42 28 359
Salutation: Dear Minister

Procurator General
Mr Alesh Dragoshi
Prokuror i Përgjithëshëm
Tirana, Albania
Telegrams: Prokuror i Përgjithëshëm
Faxes: +355 42 22950
Salutation: Dear Procurator General

COPIES TO:

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Dr Alfred Serreqi
Minister i Punëve të Jashtme
Tiranë, Albania
Faxes: +355 42 32971

The Albanian Helsinki Committee
Komiteti Shqiptar i Helsinkit
Qendra Nderkombetare e kultures, Dhoma no.35
Bulevardi "Deshmoret e kombit"
Tirana, Albania.

and to diplomatic representatives of Albania accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 May 1996.