

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 11/07/97

5 March 1997

Further information (4) on EXTRA 16/97 (EUR 11/02/97, 6 February 1997) and follow-ups EUR 11/03/97, 11 February, EUR 11/04/97, 14 February and EUR 11/05/97, 28 February - Fear of ill-treatment/prisoners of conscience/fear of extrajudicial execution

ALBANIA Alfred Peza

Shpetim Nazarko

Zamir Dule (journalist) - released

Anesti Nikolla (driver) - released

Amnesty International is gravely concerned about further reports of the arrest and ill-treatment of journalists in Albania and fears that with the declaration of a state of emergency in the country on 2 March and the introduction of press censorship the persecution of the domestic media may worsen.

On the night of 2-3 March, the offices of Albania's main opposition newspaper *Koha Jone* were set on fire, allegedly by state security police, and a café in central Tirana where journalists and members of the opposition regularly meet was similarly attacked. Many journalists are said to have gone into hiding or to have left the country. On 3 March Zamir Dule, a journalist for *Koha Jone*, together with his driver, Anesti Nikolla, were reportedly abducted by armed men. They have since been released, but were allegedly beaten by their captors. This incident recalls previous incidents in recent months in which journalists or opposition figures have been detained and ill-treated by men in plain clothes. In some cases they have been detained in police stations, strengthening the claim that those responsible for these incidents are state security officers or are linked to the state security service or to the police. On 3 March parliament passed a law merging the Ministry of the Interior and the state security police, under General Bashkim Gazidede, head of the state security police.

Alfred Peza, another *Koha Jone* journalist, who was travelling with a driver and an Italian journalist, was reportedly stopped in the town of Fier on 3 or 4 March and ordered to go into the police station. His present circumstances are unknown to Amnesty International.

On the night of 4 March the home of Shpetim Nazarko, owner of the independent newspaper *Dita Informacion*, was attacked by a number of armed men who fired 400 rounds of ammunition at the house. No-one was injured in the incident.

The organization is also deeply disturbed by emergency provisions which authorize security forces to open fire to disperse crowds and to shoot, without warning, people who have failed to surrender arms.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Armed insurgents continue to retain control over several towns in the south of the country. Amnesty International acknowledges that it is the duty of the authorities to restore order, but has warned that even in states of emergency the right to life is absolute. It has called on the authorities to ensure that security forces are instructed to observe international standards for law enforcement and has urged the government to seek a way out of the conflict through peaceful negotiation. It is disturbed by reports that two pilots who

on 3 March sought political asylum in Italy claimed that they had left Albania rather than obey orders to fire on a column of civilian vehicles near Gjirokastër, in the south of the country. A Defence Ministry spokesman has denied this and stated that the pilots were on a reconnaissance flight. The Defence Ministry statement also said that operations launched on 3 March by security forces had not involved any firefights with armed insurgents. However, a leader of the Greek minority in the south reportedly has claimed that on 4 March security forces carried out an attack at the town of Delvine, leaving "dozens of dead". This claim has not yet, to Amnesty International's knowledge, been confirmed by other sources and has been also been denied by the Defence Ministry. Earlier, the state news agency ATA reported that on 3 March police had shot and wounded three men in a van on the road between Fier and Vlora after they had failed to respond to a warning to stop. The van was reportedly found to contain three hand grenades.

Please see also Amnesty International News Service 35/97 (EUR 11/06/97, 3 March).

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Italian, English, French or German or in your own language, including some or all of the following:

- expressing grave concern at reports that Zamir Dule, a journalist, and Anesti Nikolla, his driver, were detained on 3 March and ill-treated by men in plain clothes, before being released;
- noting that Amnesty International has received other similiar reports in recent weeks and that it is alleged that state security officers or persons linked to them were responsible for these incidents; noting also the recent attacks on the offices of *Koha Jone* and a café frequented by journalists;
- urging the authorities to promptly investigate these incidents and to bring anyone responsible to justice;
- further urging the authorities to ensure that journalists are able to carry out their duties without fear of attack or intimidation from any quarter;
- seeking clarification of the present circumstances of the journalist Alfred Peza, reportedly detained in Fier on 3 or 4 March;
- acknowledging the duty of the authorities to ensure law and order in the country, but expressing deep concern over emergency provisions authorizing security forces to shoot dead, without warning, those who have failed to surrender arms, and to disperse crowds and demonstrators throwing stones by opening fire;
- recalling that Albania is a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that even at times of emergency certain human rights, such as the rights to life and freedom from torture, are absolute.

APPEALS TO:

President of Albania

Dr Sali Berisha

Presidenti i Republikës së Shqipërisë

Zyra e Presidencës, Tirana

Republic of Albania

Fax: +355 42 33761 or 355 42 28 420 (Fax/Tel)

Telegrams: President, Tirana, Albania

Salutation: Dear President

COPIES TO:

The Albanian Helsinki Committee
Komiteti Shqiptar i Helsinkit
Rr Ali Demi, Pall 2, Shk 2, ap 12,
Tirana, Republic of 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 April 1997.