

ROMANIA

@Excessive use of firearms by Romanian police

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S CONCERN:

Amnesty International is concerned that Romanian police officers on patrol reportedly shot and injured Marian Constantin Vi_an in circumstances not warranting the use of firearms. Moreover, the case of Marian Constantin Vi_an is similar to other incidents of police shootings that have recently occurred leading Amnesty International to fear that the Romanian police is increasingly resorting to the excessive use of firearms while carrying out their duty. Internationally recognized principles only allow for the use of firearms in situations of self-defence or defence of others, and as a means to prevent a particularly serious crime involving a threat to life. Amnesty International is concerned that the use of firearms in the case of Marian Constantin Vi_an was not in proportion to the seriousness of the offence or the situation.

BACKGROUND:

The information in this case comes from an article published in the Romanian daily România Libera on 26 August 1995. On the previous day, at around 4am, after having been alerted by an anonymous phone call, a police patrol went to Block X6 in Arad, a town in western Romania, near the Hungarian border. The patrol caught Marian Constantin Vi_an holding a car wheel and ordered him to give himself up. Upon this the suspect dropped the wheel and started to run. Police officer David Romeo subsequently fired his gun twice in the air before shooting at Marian Constantin Vi_an's legs, who as a result was wounded and taken to Arad County Hospital.

Amnesty International has received several reports describing similar shootings. In most of these, the victims of the shooting were caught in the act of stealing goods or cars and, upon seeing the police, started to run away. The police officers then fired warning shots and subsequently fired shots at the running men, injuring some of them. In at least one incident this year a man was shot dead by the police. (According to Amnesty International's information, only in one case the victim was armed and reportedly tried to attack a police officer.)

Amnesty International is asking the Romanian authorities to be informed of the outcome of investigations made by competent military prosecutors into the use of firearms in these incidents. The organization has also urged the authorities to instruct the police forces and other law enforcement forces to refrain from using firearms unless this is warranted by the situation.