

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 48/03/91
Distr.: CO

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26 March 1991

@Idriz GËRVALLA

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Idriz Gërvalla, a lawyer, was arrested at his home in Priština on 21 March 1991 and was taken before the local magistrate's court for petty offences. He was sentenced to 60 days' imprisonment for "having caused disruption to public order". He is being held in the district prison in Priština.

As a lawyer, Idriz Gërvalla has acted as defence counsel in various political trials of ethnic Albanian citizens in Kosovo. He is also the President of the local branch of the Democratic League of Kosovo in Vranjevac, a neighbourhood in Priština, the capital of Kosovo province. The Democratic League of Kosovo, led by the writer Ibrahim Rugova, is the largest opposition movement of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo province, which has been brought under increasingly tight control of the authorities of the Republic of Serbia.

Idriz Gërvalla was previously arrested and held in detention for about four days in late December 1990, after police had searched his house and found a supply of copies of the Albanian-language magazine *Alternativa*, which is published by an association of ethnic Albanians in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Police confiscated these magazines, as well as money received by Gërvalla for copies already sold and a number of books found in his home. To Amnesty International's knowledge, distribution of *Alternativa* has not been formally prohibited by the Serbian authorities. Since November 1990 however, scores of ethnic Albanians have been sentenced under public order regulations to prison terms of up to 60 days for selling or possessing copies of certain magazines in the Albanian language published outside Serbia. Although the precise grounds for Idriz Gërvalla's recent conviction are not known to Amnesty International, it seems likely that they are connected with his involvement in peaceful opposition activity and with his distributing *Alternativa* in particular.

During the days of his detention in December last year, Idriz Gërvalla was reportedly kept in an unheated cell where temperature was below freezing point most of the time, as a result of which he contracted pneumonia. He suffers from asthma, and his general health is said to be poor.

Reason for Amnesty International concern:

As the information currently available to Amnesty International suggests that Idriz Gërvalla was arrested and imprisoned solely for his non-violent

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political activity, the organization considers him a prisoner of conscience, detained in violation of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees freedom of expression. Yugoslavia ratified this Covenant in 1971. Amnesty International is appealing to the Yugoslav authorities for Idriz Gërvalla's immediate and unconditional release.

