

EXTERNAL

AI Index: EUR 70/01/96

This is a limited action. Please restrict appeals to 10 per Section.

UA 41/96 Ill-treatment / Fear of further ill-treatment 20 February 1996

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA

(KOSOVO Province)

Sejdullah Rashiti, high-school student

Sejdullah Rashiti, a high-school student from a village near Gnjilane, has recently twice been arrested and physically ill-treated by a police officer, who has threatened to take further reprisals against him.

The police officer is one of two officers who are charged with the 1991 killing of Zejnullah Rashiti, Sejdullah's brother. The two officers are accused of having shot dead the young man when he attempted to flee after they stopped him to check his identity card.

In March 1995 the two officers were brought to trial on charges of murder, after Rashiti's family started criminal proceedings against them. The trial was postponed, however, after the family's lawyer filed a request that a third police officer, the commander of the patrol, be included in the indictment. This request was subsequently refused by the public prosecutor. In April 1995 the trial was again postponed because one of the defendants had failed to appear in court. The trial has still not ended.

At least one of the officers remains in active service in Gnjilane. On 10 February 1996 he reportedly arrested Sejdullah Rashiti in the marketplace in Gnjilane, questioned him about weapons, and physically ill-treated him. Three days later, on 13 February, the same police officer reportedly stopped Sejdullah Rashiti in the street and beat him with a rubber truncheon, telling him he would not stop until the family withdrew their charges against him.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Police officers in Yugoslavia are rarely convicted, or indeed prosecuted, for serious human rights abuses. In most cases charges are never brought, or criminal proceedings are unduly prolonged. In this case it appears that the investigation against the two officers was initially dropped and was only reopened after the family filed charges.

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

- expressing concern about reports that Sejdullah Rashiti was, on 10 and 13 February 1996, physically ill-treated and threatened by a police officer in Gnjilane. State that you understand that the officer in question is one of two officers charged with killing Zejnullah Rashiti, a brother of Sejdullah Rashiti, in 1991;
- urging that these reports of ill-treatment be promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigated and that pending the outcome of this investigation (and also pending the outcome of the trial on charges of killing Zejnullah Rashiti) the officer be suspended from duty;

APPEALS TO:

District public prosecutor
Okru_ni javni tu_ilac
38250 Gnjilane

AP Kosovo i Metohija
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
Telegrams: Okru_ni javni tu_ilac, Gnjilane, Yugoslavia
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

Chief of police, Gnjilane
Sekretar
SUP
38250 Gnjilane
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
Telegrams: Sekretar SUP-a, Gnjilane, Yugoslavia
Salutation: Dear Secretary

District Prefect
Na_elnik kosovskopomoravskog okruga
Borisa Kidrica 11
38250 Gnjilane
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
Faxes: +381 280 20249
Telegrams: Na_elnik okruga, Gnilane, Yugoslavia
Salutation: Dear Prefect

COPIES TO:

Serbian Minister of Justice
Arandjel Marki_evi_
Ministar pravde
Nemanjina 26,
11000 Beograd
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
Faxes: +381 11 659 147

and to diplomatic representatives of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 10 April 1996.