

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 163/95 Death after custody / Fear of torture/ill-treatment

7 July 19

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA (Kosovo province) Shefki Latifi

**Ramadan Salihu
and other ethnic Albanians**

The death on 4 July 1995 of Shefki Latifi after allegedly being severely beaten in custody has greatly heightened fears for the safety of other ethnic Albanians in Kosovo province as short-term arrests there continue.

On the morning of 4 July, Shefki Latifi, from the town of Podujevo and an accountant of the local "parallel" ethnic Albanian municipal bureau, was reportedly arrested in the street by police officers and taken to the police station in Podujevo. There, he and a friend, Ramadan Salihu, whom the police had arrested at Shefki Latifi's house while looking for Latifi, were reportedly severely beaten by police officers, including one known to his two victims by his nickname.

The two men were then released and the police ordered Ramadan Salihu to drive Shefki Latifi home. It seems that Latifi, conscious but injured, asked his friend to drive him to hospital. As they were about to enter the local medical centre, police officers reportedly stopped the car, forced Ramadan Salihu out, and again beat him. Shefki Latifi received first aid at the centre and was sent home, where he died later that morning.

Shefki Latifi's family have reportedly been told by staff at Pristina hospital (Pristina is the capital of Kosovo province) that an investigating judge in the town of Prokuplje has been asked to issue an order for an autopsy to be carried out.

Meanwhile, arrests of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo province are continuing. The number of arrests, particularly in Podujevo, has increased since 26 June, when Bejtush Beka, an ethnic Albanian police officer working for the state security police of Serbia, was shot in the back in Podujevo by an unknown person. He subsequently died. Police have already arrested and questioned many ethnic Albanian political and human rights activists, including members of local organizations, like Shefki Latifi, who refuse to recognize Serbian authority in the province. Although the majority of those arrested are released within 24 hours, many are alleged to have been severely ill-treated, compounding fears for the safety of any ethnic Albanian now taken into custody.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

To Amnesty International's knowledge, Shefki Latifi is the third ethnic Albanian in Kosovo in 1995 to have died after arrest and alleged ill-treatment in custody.

On the night of 12/13 April Abedin Ahmeti died in police custody in Mitrovica. Two police officers are reportedly under investigation in connection with his death. On 9 April Ismail Salihu was arrested by police and severely ill-treated; as a result he was admitted to hospital from 10 to 14 April. He returned home but died on 1 May, apparently as a result of his ill-treatment.

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

- expressing deep concern about the alleged ill-treatment on 4 July 1995 in Podujevo police station of Shefki Latifi and Ramadan Salihu, which apparently resulted in the death of Shefki Latifi;
- calling for a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation into these allegations, and urging that any police officer responsible for the ill-treatment of these two men be brought to justice;
- noting that Amnesty International constantly receives reports of the torture and ill-treatment of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo province, in violation of international human rights treaties recognized by Yugoslavia; - calling for immediate measures to put a stop to torture and ill-treatment, and for any police officer who fails to respect international human rights standards to be duly prosecuted and brought to justice.

APPEALS TO

nnMinister of Internal Affairs of Serbia
 Zoran Sokolovi_
 Ministar unutrašnjih poslova Republike Srbije
 Kneza Miloša 101
 11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia
Faxes: +381 11 685 937
Telegrams: MUP Srbije, Belgrade, Yugoslavia
Salutation: Dear Minister

The chief of police, Podujevo
 Na_elnik Organa Unutrašnjih Poslova
 38240 Podujevo, AP Kosovo i Metohija, Yugoslavia
Telegrams: Nacelnik, OUP, Podujevo, AP Kosovo i Metojija.
Salutation: Chief of Police

The district public prosecutor
 Okru_ni javni tu_ilac
 38000 Priština, AP Kosovo i Metohija, Yugoslavia
Telegrams: Okruzni javni tuzilac, Pristina, AP Kosovo i Metohija
Salutation: Dear Prosecutor

COPIES TO:

Committee for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms, Priština:
 Xhavit Mitrovica 15
 38000 Priština, Yugoslavia.

Humanitarian Law Fund
 Terazije 6/111
 11000 Beograd
 Yugoslavia

and to diplomatic representatives of 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 20 August 1995.