

EXTERNAL

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Ill-treatment/Fear of extrajudicial executions

2 March 1998

**FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA**Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo province

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A wave of violence is sweeping through Kosovo province in southern Serbia, leading to widespread violations of human rights.

On 2 March 1998 police broke up peaceful demonstrations in Priština and other towns, using tear-gas, water cannons and truncheons. The demonstrations were organized by ethnic Albanians in protest over the weekend shooting of other ethnic Albanians. Following the police violence, some demonstrators reportedly responded by throwing sticks and stones. Although the number of injured has not been confirmed, it is reported that ethnic Albanian journalists were among the victims.

In recent days at least 16 ethnic Albanians and four police officers were reportedly killed during other clashes between police and ethnic Albanians. Ethnic Albanian sources are claiming that many more Albanians have been killed, including civilians who were not involved in fighting.

On 28 February police reportedly clashed with members of the UÇK (*Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës* - Kosovo Liberation Army) in the village of Likošane, near Glogovac town. Two police officers and five Albanians, including one woman, were killed. Ethnic Albanians claim that at least seven, and possibly many more, Albanians were shot dead by police firing from a helicopter in irez village near the town of Srbica the same day. Both these villages are in the Drenica region, where UÇK activity is strongest, and where police have had restricted movements in recent months.

Since full independent reports of the killings are not yet available, it is not yet possible to say whether any of the ethnic Albanian victims were extrajudicially executed.

An unknown number of people have been arrested in the course of the fighting and the demonstrations.

Attacks are also reported to have taken place at the weekend on refugee centres housing Croatian Serb refugees. No one is reported to have been injured.

Amnesty International fears that further unlawful killings may occur in the context of the continuing clashes. Amnesty International also fears that arrested ethnic Albanians, both those alleged to have been involved in terrorist acts, and those involved in the demonstrations, will be subject to torture and ill-treatment in detention.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In July 1990 the Serbian parliament suspended the Kosovo parliament and government after ethnic Albanian deputies of the Kosovo parliament declared Kosovo independent of the Republic of Serbia. Since then, the majority of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo province (where they constitute over 85 per cent of the population) refuse to recognize Serbia's authority in the province and a number of "parallel" institutions (in particular in the fields of local government, education and medicine) have been established by ethnic Albanians.

The leaders of the main ethnic Albanian parties in Kosovo province have advocated the province's secession by peaceful means only. However, since 1996 violent

attacks on Serbian police and Serbs or Albanians associated with the authorities have occurred with increasing frequency. Responsibility for many of these incidents has been claimed by the clandestine organization, the UÇK. Since certain clashes with the UÇK in late November 1997 police have reportedly restricted their movements severely in certain parts of the province. The new clashes may herald police operations to reestablish their control in these areas.

Police ill-treatment is an everyday occurrence in Kosovo province. Human rights abuses such as torture, extrajudicial executions and unfair trials of political prisoners are occurring regularly.

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

- expressing concern that police in Kosovo province have beaten ethnic Albanian demonstrators during peaceful demonstrations;
- noting reports that police have shot at least 16 ethnic Albanians in the province in the last three days;
- stressing that Amnesty International does not deny the right of the authorities to use force when responding to violent attacks upon them, but reminding them that national law and international standards such as the United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and related texts recommend strict guidelines on the use of force;
- urging that anyone arrested in connection with these events be properly protected from ill-treatment or torture in detention, particularly by ensuring that they be given full access to defence lawyers and family;
- calling for immediate, thorough, impartial and independent investigations into the beatings and shootings;
- demanding that any police officers found to be responsible for beating demonstrators or unlawfully killing or wounding others be held to account for their actions.

**APPEALS TO:**

**President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia**

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**Faxes: + 381 11 636 775/682 167**

**Salutation: Dear President**

**Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia**

Vlajko Stojiljković  
Ministar unutrašnjih poslova Republike Srbije  
Kneza Miloša 101, 11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

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**Salutation: Dear Minister**

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 13 April 1998.