

EXTERNAL

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Avni MIFTARI

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Kosovo province)

According to a statement which 19-year-old Avni Miftari, an ethnic Albanian, gave to a local human rights organization, at around 9.30 on the evening of 2 August 1996 he was leaving the Beni-Dona mini-market in Podujevo, where he works, when a police car came up to him. Two riot police officers pursued him as he went into his uncle's house, which was nearby. Catching him, one of them slapped him while the other beat him with his automatic rifle. He was hit on the nose and it began to bleed. The officers grabbed him by the arms, and put him in the police car. On the way to the local police station, one of them again hit him in the head with his rifle butt, causing him to lose consciousness. He regained consciousness in the police station, and since he was in considerable pain and was bleeding from the nose, asked for a doctor. He was told to "Shut up and sit over there." Then one of the police officers, unprovoked, began to hit him.

Avni Miftari spent the night in the corridor. Other people were also detained in the corridor, but as he was ordered to lie with his face to the floor, he was not able to see who they were. At around 8am on 3 August 1996, two plainclothes and two uniformed police officers took an oral statement from Avni Miftari, after which they put him in a room and again beat him. He was released later that day to his relatives, and sought medical treatment for injuries to his head and nose. It appears that he may also have suffered a broken rib.

Amnesty International's concern: Amnesty International is concerned that Avni Miftari was ill-treated at Podujevo police station on 2 and 3 August date by police officers and is calling for a full and impartial investigation into the incident. The organization is further calling for those responsible to be brought to justice and for fair and adequate compensation for the victim/victim's family.

Both Yugoslav law and international human rights treaties which the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia recognizes as legally binding (in particular the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ratified by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991) prohibit torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Amnesty International opposes unconditionally torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of all prisoners.

Background: Amnesty International continues to receive frequent reports of the arrest, questioning and ill-treatment of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo province which is predominantly inhabited by ethnic Albanians, the majority of whom refuse to recognize Serbian authority in the province and call for its secession. The particular brutality of this incident, however, may well have been in retribution for explosions which took place on 2 August 1996 at police stations in Podujevo, Krpimej, Luzane, and Priština; no one was injured in the attacks. An organization calling itself the "Liberation Army of Kosovo" has claimed responsibility for planting the bombs, which were detonated within an hour of one another. Attacks on police earlier this year were followed by, as in this case, the arbitrary arrest and sometimes brutal ill-treatment of ethnic Albanians. ¹

¹see Amnesty International Urgent Actions EXTRA 58/96, EUR 70/10/96, 26 April 1996; and EXTRA 97/96 and update 1, EUR 70/14/96, 26 June 1996 and EUR 70/18/96, 13 August 1996.