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Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Kosovo province): The crying need for access to De_ane

As human rights organizations and other independent observers continue to pursue reports about severe human rights violations, including killings, committed during and immediately after the operations in De_ane, Amnesty International delegates who are currently in the region are calling for international access now to help prevent the torture, or worse, of any reported detainees.

“We have interviewed displaced ethnic Albanians from De_ane. They are desperate for information about an estimated 100 to 150 people who did not flee along with other ethnic Albanians,” said the Amnesty International delegates.

“Judging from the testimonies we have collected, the reason that some people were left behind may have been that they were already in detention at the time.”

According to some accounts, police had been confining people in private homes, either their own, or collectively with other families. The secondary school and the "Dekor" building are two other frequently mentioned possible places of detention. However, the Serbian authorities have not allowed international organizations and journalists the unrestricted access to De_ane which would allow the truth or otherwise of these reports to be known.

De_ane was the scene of armed confrontation in the last days of May, resulting in the flight of thousands of ethnic Albanians from the town and surrounding villages. Regardless of any possible legitimate aims of the security operations, directed allegedly against members of the Kosovo Liberation Army in De_ane, Amnesty International fears civilians may have been deliberately targeted.

Credible testimony from ethnic Albanians, corroborated by the observations of international diplomats and journalists allowed to visit De_ane last week on a chaperoned visit, suggests that houses were looted and burned after ethnic Albanians fled into neighbouring Albania or Montenegro.

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