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## **Kosovo: Double tragedy in Koriša**

*Kukës -- The killing of civilians in Koriša on the night of 13-14 May is the second tragedy in this small village in recent weeks Amnesty International said today.*

*Witness statements taken by Amnesty International researchers working in refugee camps in Kukës, Albania suggest that Koriša (Korisha in Albanian) had previously been subject to several offensives by Serbian police and the Yugoslav Army.*

*During one incident around 24 March 1999, brothers Vesel (70) and Musli Ahmetaj (68) were shot by police in Vesel's courtyard and house. Their bodies were later found at a garbage dump near the village.*

*In the early morning of 14 April a force of police entered the village. Large numbers of villagers fled into the hills behind the village where armed ethnic Albanians of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) were present. The hills were reportedly subject to shelling by the Yugoslav Army. Police started to torch some homes close to the entrance of the village and to occupy others.*

Refugees claim that many civilians were unlawfully killed by the police. Amnesty International has gathered corroborated testimony documenting the killing of four men on or after 14 April:

- One elderly man, Ferhat Muçaj, did not want to abandon his home. The building was quickly set alight and his charred remains were reported to have been found in the ruins
- Three villagers, Avni Kabashi, 49, his son, Urim, 18, and nephew, Tarzan Ramani, also 18, went back into the village on 17 April together with KLA fighters. They were caught when they came upon Serbian police or soldiers in Avni's house, where their mutilated and partially burned bodies were later reportedly found.

Villagers claim that other killings took place and that mass graves were dug and bodies buried at the garbage dump close to the village. The full extent of the burials and the identities of those buried is currently difficult to confirm.

Amnesty International has called on President Slobodan Milošević, NATO and the KLA to honour their obligations under international humanitarian law. These include refraining from direct attacks on non-combatants and from any indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks.

Amnesty International welcomes reports that NATO will conduct an investigation into the killings in Koriša during the night of 13-14 May and urges that this investigation be swift and transparent.

*ENDS.../*

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