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BULGARIA: NEW REPORTS OF UNLAWFUL USE OF FIREARMS BY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS

Amnesty International's Concerns

Amnesty International is concerned about continuing reports of the apparently unlawful use of firearms by police officers in Bulgaria. In the organization's view the use of firearms in the cases described below is at variance with internationally recognized principles.

Amnesty International is concerned that the use of firearms by police officers in disputed circumstances is a long-standing problem which the Bulgarian authorities have consistently failed effectively to address and that investigations into such incidents, if they are launched at all, are not thorough and impartial.

Amnesty International is furthermore concerned that certain provisions in the new Law on the Ministry of the Interior, which regulate the use of firearms, are at variance with the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, which lay down essential criteria justifying the use of firearms.

The case of Ivan Asenov

According to an article published in *демокрация (Democracy)* on 28 October 1997, on the evening of 26 October 1997 a police officer shot Ivan Asenov, a Rom, in the shoulder. The officer had reportedly been summoned to intervene in a fight in the Romani neighbourhood. From the information available to Amnesty International, there was no indication that anyone involved in the incident had been armed or had attempted in any way to threaten the life of the officer or anyone else.

The case of Angelina Krainova

On 20 November 1997 at around 2 pm in Sliven, a police officer reportedly shot Angelina Krainova, a 15-year-old Romani girl. An article published in *Труд (Labour)* on 22 November 1997 described how Angelina Krainova had been observed in a group which allegedly assaulted a 71-year-old man and stole his wallet.

When a police patrol tried to apprehend this group of youths they reportedly ran. An officer who pursued Angelina Krainova shot her, bringing her to the ground. The injuries she suffered as a result of the shooting were not specified.

The case of Angel Bozhov

On 10 December 1997 at around 7.45 pm in Sofia Chief Sergeant GV¹ reportedly shot Angel Bozhov in the head. Four days earlier Angel Bozhov had reported to the police that his car had been stolen. On the day of the shooting incident, having just recovered the car and while driving along Boulevard Slivnitsa, Angel Bozhov and his 22-year-old son Lazar Bozhov were stopped by a police patrol comprising five or six officers. One officer opened the door on the driver's side and allegedly shouted "Get out!". The officer then shot Angel Bozhov in the head at very close range. Another officer took Lazar Bozhov out of the car, kicked him several times and handcuffed him while he attempted to explain to him his identity. Angel Bozhov died in hospital the following morning from head injuries suffered in the shooting.

The case of Genadi Slavchev

On 14 December 1997, the Montana Regional Police Directorate released a statement that, on an unspecified date in Lom, Chief Sergeant Krasimir Bakalov shot 42-year-old Genadi Slavchev in the leg while he was reportedly attempting to escape from the police lock-up. Although he had suffered an unspecified injury as a result of the shooting, he was returned to the lock-up. There was no information that Genadi Slavchev received any medical care for his injuries.

Recommendations

Amnesty International once again urges the Bulgarian authorities to ensure that impartial and thorough investigations are conducted immediately into all shootings by law enforcement officials resulting in death or injury, to instruct law enforcement agencies to give the investigating and prosecuting authorities their full cooperation in order to establish the facts of every case, and to bring any police officers suspected of inappropriate use of firearms to justice.

The organisation also urges the Bulgarian authorities to provide police and other law enforcement officials with clear regulations and to initiate effective training programs on the use of firearms which will ensure that relevant international standards such as the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials are observed and adhered to. Amnesty International also appeals to the Ministry of the Interior to publicize regular statistics on police shootings, including the number of cases which resulted in the prosecution of officers for inappropriate use of firearms.

¹The full name of the officer is known to Amnesty International