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## ALBANIA

### **Dhimitraq Petro, aged 41, from Korça**

According to reports in the Albanian press, Dhimitraq Petro was arrested in Korça after his wife, following a family quarrel, called police to their home. (One report alleges that his wife had attacked Dhimitraq Petro's father and brother.) This incident appears to have taken place on 14 September 1994, although one report indicates the date may have been 17 September 1994.

After arresting Dhimitraq Petro, police took him to the local police station; on the way they beat him so badly that he lost consciousness and had to be urgently brought to hospital. He was operated on but remained in coma and died on 18 September 1994 of intracranial injuries, leaving behind his wife and three small children.

According to a report in the independent newspaper *Koha Jone* of 23 September 1994, his family claimed that Dhimitraq Petro's name had not been registered either at the police station or at the hospital. A relative who attempted to start penal proceedings against the (unknown) police officers responsible for Dhimitraq Petro's injuries reportedly had the impression that his efforts were in vain. He allegedly met the local chief of police who accompanied him to a military procurator, who sent him to another procurator who directed him back to the police.

*Koha Jone* also noted that Dhimitraq Petro's mother is a member of the Greek minority and that consequently his case had been taken up by "Omonia", an organization representing the Greek minority in Albania.

According to another press report, in *Zeri i Popullit*, the newspaper of the Socialist Party, Dhimitraq Petro was the third person to be killed by police within a year in Korça. The paper claimed that in only one of these cases had the police officer responsible been brought to justice and even then he had received only "a symbolic punishment".

### **Background**

There have been numerous allegations of police abuses reported in the Albanian press this year and at least seven people are reported to have died as a result of being shot by police or from of ill-treatment in police custody.

In a statement published at the beginning of October 1994, a local human rights organization, the Albanian Helsinki Committee, noted that "Reports of excesses by police officers are constantly reaching our Committee ....[The Committee] is aware of disciplinary and punitive measures which the competent authorities have taken in some cases of this kind. However, we are obliged to note that the response [by the authorities] has been inadequate and absolutely disproportionate to the scale of this phenomenon. We call for this problem to be resolutely tackled and for more effective measures be taken against those officials who instead of defending the law gravely violate it".

Please refer to Amnesty International's report, *Albania: Human rights abuses by police* (AI Index: 11/05/93) issued in October 1993.