

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Death Penalty

17 July 1992

ALBANIA

Petrit MEMA

According to information received by Amnesty International, Petrit Mema, a 23-year-old soldier from the district of Elbasan, was sentenced to death early in July 1992. He was reportedly found guilty of the rape and murder of a young girl in Tirana.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Amnesty International believes that eight death sentences (including Petrit Mema's) have been passed in Albania between January and mid-July 1992 and that two persons have been executed. Three of the remaining cases have reportedly been commuted to life imprisonment, but it is not yet known which. The two executions took place on 25 June 1992 (see UA 216/92, AI Index EUR 11/06/92 of 26 June 1992).

By law, the Supreme Court hears appeals against death sentences within ten days of receipt of the case and reviews all death sentences even if no appeal is made. If the death sentence is confirmed by the Supreme Court, the defendant may petition for clemency to the President of the Republic of Albania, who must in any case examine and approve all death sentences before they are carried out. Execution may be by shooting or hanging.

According to a Reuters report of 2 March 1992, violent crime in Albania increased dramatically in 1992; murders increased by 55 per cent. Albania's chief investigator was reported as stating that the tradition of the blood feud, formerly repressed under communist rule, was reviving and that revenge killings were on the increase. Amnesty International is concerned that the authorities are using the threat of the death penalty to control this problem.

Elections were held for the People's Assembly (the parliament) on 22 March 1992. These resulted in a parliamentary majority for the Democratic Party (DP) which ousted the Socialist Party (the renamed Communists). On 9 April a new president, Sali Berisha, leader of the DP, was elected President of the Republic of Albania in place of Ramiz Alia.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at reports that Petrit Mema was sentenced to death after being found guilty of the rape and murder of a young girl;
- stating that you recognize the gravity of Petrit Mema's crime, but that Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases without reservation, on the grounds that it is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment;
- welcoming the fact that three death sentences have reportedly been commuted to prison sentences this year and urging the President to again exercise his powers to commute this death sentence if no such clemency has yet been granted.

APPEALS TO:

1) President Sali Berisha
President of the Republic of Albania
Tirana
The Republic of Albania
Telegrams: President Sali Berisha, Tirana Albania
Telexes: 4298 pkprssh ab
Fax : + 355 42 32971 or 32979

Salutation: Dear President

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice:
Kudret Çela
Ministria e Drejtësisë
Rruga Marsel Kashen
Tirana
The Republic of Albania

Minister of Foreign Affairs:
Alfred Sarreqi
Ministria e Punëve të Jashtme
Tirana
The Republic of Albania

Forum for Human Rights:
Prof. Arben Puto
President of the Forum for Human Rights
Rr. Lidhja Prizrenit nr.3; ap.5,
Tirana
The Republic of Albania

and to diplomatic representatives of Albania accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 28 August 1992.