

EXTERNAL

23 September 1996

ESTONIA

**The alleged ill-treatment of David Mease and Erkki Maasalo**

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S CONCERN:**

Amnesty International is concerned about reports concerning two incidents in Estonia. On 29 November 1995, Erkki Maasalo was allegedly ill-treated by a private security guard and later denied help by police officers. On 27 April 1996, David Mease was reportedly seriously ill-treated by Estonian customs officers and police officers. Amnesty International is asking the Estonian authorities to open a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation into the ill-treatment of David Mease and questions the decision of the Estonian General Prosecutor not to open an investigation into the alleged ill-treatment of Erkki Maasalo and the reported misconduct of the police. The organization is also calling upon the authorities to ensure that law enforcement officers are aware of international standards regulating the use of force.

**BACKGROUND:**

The information on these cases comes from written statements by Erkki Maasalo and David Mease and from medical reports describing their injuries.

According to this information, on 29 November 1995, around 10.30pm, Erkki Maasalo, a Finnish national on a business trip in Estonia, was sitting in the lobby of the Viru hotel in Tallinn. At some point he fell asleep on a sofa and was woken up by a hotel security guard, who thought he was a local and told him to leave the hotel. After Erkki Maasalo told him he was a hotel guest and did not intend to leave, the guard kicked him violently in his left leg. The hotel staff refused to call the police, as Erkki Maasalo had requested, and instead of taking him to a hospital, drove him to a nearby police station. There he had to hand in his wallet which contained his passport, credit cards and money. Despite his attempts to report the ill-treatment, to his knowledge no written record was made. The police also refused to take him to a hospital and finally ordered him to leave around 2am. Outside he managed to get a lift back to the hotel. He returned to Finland and went to a hospital on 1 December. A medical certificate states that he suffered a fracture to his ankle and that he would have to take sick leave until the beginning of February. Erkki Maasalo filed a complaint with the Estonian State Prosecutor on 25 March 1996. He received a reply from the State Prosecutor on 25 April 1996, stating that no criminal investigation was launched into the ill-treatment due to lack of evidence.

On 27 April 1996, David Mease, an American national working in a kindergarten in

Finland, was returning from a business trip to Tallinn. After he had gone through passport control he realized he could not find his boarding pass to the ferry, and he stopped and started looking for it. Several people in his group tried to help him which raised the suspicion of a police officer who came over and started pushing him. When David Mease tried to defend himself, he was grabbed by the throat and pulled to the ground. The officer then called for assistance through his walkie-talkie. Other police officers arrived and David Mease was thrown in a police car and taken to a local police station. He was taken inside to the officer in charge. David Mease stated he was an American and that he had committed no offence. At this point the officer in charge ordered him to be handcuffed. He then stubbed his cigarette out on the last two fingers of David Mease's right hand. Upon this, two officers took turns in beating him with truncheons all over his body. Finally one officer kicked him violently in the rib cage, throwing him against the wall behind him. After this the beating stopped and his handcuffs were removed. He was taken to a cell where he spent the night. All the time he was refused permission to call his girlfriend or to use the toilet. The next morning he had to sign a piece of paper and was then released. He left the country the same day. A medical certificate, dated 3 May 1996, states that he suffered burns to two fingers of his right hand. He also had bruising to the body and right arm and leg, and a fractured rib. To Amnesty International's knowledge, David Mease has not filed a complaint about the ill-treatment with the Estonian prosecuting authorities.