

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Fear of extrajudicial executions/

22 December 1992

Fear of ill treatment in custody

YUGOSLAVIA: Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo province in the Republic of Serbia

Over the past year Amnesty International has received reports of at least 15 cases in which ethnic Albanians in Kosovo province have died after being shot by members of the largely Serbian police and military forces in disputed circumstances. Such cases are becoming increasingly frequent and have provoked fears that they may lead to the outbreak of ethnic conflict with catastrophic consequences, as seen in the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Amnesty International also receives frequent reports that members of the police force in Kosovo province have beaten or otherwise ill-treated ethnic Albanians, and it is alleged that as a result of ill-treatment several people have died this year. In June 1992 Amnesty International issued a report Ethnic Albanians - Victims of torture and ill-treatment by police in Kosovo province (AI Index: EUR 48/18/92) which documented 15 illustrative cases supported by victims' statements, photographs and medical reports.

The following are the most recent incidents of which Amnesty International has learned:

On 11 November, Nasijet Selimi, aged 26, was shot dead by members of the Yugoslav Army on guard in front of a military garrison in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo province in the Republic of Serbia. Ethnic Albanian sources claim he was unarmed; the military authorities described him as a terrorist and said he had attacked the guards.

On 3 December, Hafiz Arifi, aged 18, was shot dead by police in the market place of Pristina. According to ethnic Albanian sources, immediately before his death, police had arrested him for selling cigarettes on the black market and then allegedly beat him before releasing him. He was shot while running back towards the market. However, according to a statement of the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs of 3 December, police had attempted to arrest Hafiz and a brother Sami, who resisted and physically attacked the police officers. One of the brothers fired a pistol at the police officers who then used firearms in self-defence.

On 8 December Ragip Abiti, aged 47, was shot dead by police after an argument with them in the town of Vucitrn, where he had come from a local village to sell firewood. According to ethnic Albanian sources, Ragip Abiti was unarmed. Police sources said that he attacked the officers with an axe.

On 16 December Besim Shala, aged 18, died in Pristina hospital after being shot by soldiers of the military barracks at Pristina airport. According to military sources,

on 9 December he entered the airport area to steal fuel and after being warned by a sentry opened fire. The sentry returned fire, mortally wounding Besim Shala.

On 19 December, Adem Zeqiraj, aged 37, died in Pristina hospital, apparently as a result of ill-treatment in custody. He was arrested on 17 December by police conducting a search for weapons in his father's house in Brovina village. According to ethnic Albanian sources, he was taken to a police station in Ponoshec, where he was beaten by police for several hours as a result of which he was brought to hospital with internal bleeding caused by injuries to his kidneys.

Page 2 of UA 406/92

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Kosovo province in southern Serbia is inhabited by a largely ethnic Albanian majority (accounting for up to 90 per cent of its population). In July 1990 the Serbian parliament suspended the Kosovo Government and parliament after ethnic Albanian members of the Kosovo parliament declared Kosovo independent of the Republic of Serbia. In September 1990 the Republic of Serbia adopted a new constitution which deprived Kosovo province of most of its autonomy. Since then most ethnic Albanians in Kosovo province refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the Serbian authorities in the province.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/airmail letters either in English, French or German or in your own language:

- expressing concern about reports of the above deaths;
- noting that accounts of these incidents are often contradictory;
- urging that the authorities institute a commission, composed equally of Serbian and ethnic Albanian members, to investigate the above incidents and others in which ethnic Albanians have died after being shot by police or military in disputed circumstances or (as in the case of Adem Zeqiraj) after allegedly being ill-treated in custody;
- urging that the findings of this commission and its methods be made public and that those found responsible for human rights violations be brought to justice;
- urging that all members of law-enforcement bodies be informed of, and required to implement, international standards for law-enforcement.

APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia:

Mr Zoran Sokolovi_

Ministar unutrašnjih poslova Republike Srbije

Kneza Miloša 101

11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

Salutation: Dear Minister

Telegrams: Minister of Internal Affairs Sokolovic, Beograd, Yugoslavia

Faxes: + 38 11 683 041

2) Minister of Defence of the Republic of Serbia:

Ministar odbrane

Nemanjina 11

11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

Salutation: Dear Minister

Telegrams: Minister of Defence, Beograd, Yugoslavia

Faxes: + 38 11 682 167

3) President of the Republic of Serbia:

Slobodan Miloševi_

Predsednik Republike Srbije

Srpskih vladara 14

11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

Salutation: Dear President

Telegrams: President Milosevic, Beograd, Yugoslavia

Faxes: + 38 11 682 167

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia:

Mr Milan Pani_

Premijer Savezne Vlade

Bulevar Lenjina 2, 11070 Beograd, Yugoslavia

Faxes: + 38 11 636 775 or + 38 11 195 244

2) Federal Minister of Justice:

Dr Tibor Varadi

Savezni ministar za pravosudje

Omladinskih brigada 1, 11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

Faxes: + 38 11 636 775 or + 38 11 195 244

3) Committee for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms, Pristina:

Khavit Mitrovica 15

38000 Pristina, Yugoslavia

and to diplomatic representatives of Yugoslavia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 2 February 1993.