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FRY: Amnesty International calls for more international civilian police in Kosovo after attack on Serbs

The killing and beating of ethnic Serbs in the centre of Priština during national holiday celebrations yesterday is a clear signal that more civilian police are needed to enforce law and order in Kosovo, Amnesty International said today.

Sixty-two-year-old Dragoslav Bašić, a Serb professor from Priština University, was driving his wife and mother-in-law through Priština in the early hours of Monday morning when their car was set upon by a group of ethnic Albanians who dragged him from the vehicle and shot him dead. His wife and mother-in-law were also pulled from the car and violently beaten while a large number of ethnic Albanians looked on.

Amnesty International believes that the incident is part of a pattern of revenge attacks perpetrated by ethnic Albanian groups and individuals against Serbs, Roma and moderate Albanians in Kosovo since the deployment of an international security presence (KFOR) and the United Nations interim administration (UNMIK) in June 1999.

While these attacks have decreased in recent weeks, Amnesty International is concerned that unless the international community deploys the required number of international civilian police necessary to maintain law and order in Kosovo, violent human rights abuses will continue. To date only 1,717 civilian police have been deployed in Kosovo out of the 4,718 requested by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

On 10 November, the KFOR peace-keeping force announced that they have recorded 379 murders since they started their count in June. At least 135 victims, a hugely disproportionate number, were Serbs. Representatives of the Serbian community claim the number is even higher.

“During this period of transition, law and order is crucial to peace and stability in Kosovo. The international community must help curb the violence and put an end to ethnic persecution by deploying an adequate international civilian police force on the streets,” Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International is calling upon all contributing states to deploy personnel trained in human rights standards as a matter of urgency. Amnesty International further urges members of the ethnic Albanian community in Kosovo to cooperate fully with the international civilian police force in its investigations and assist in bringing the perpetrators to justice.
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