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**PUBLIC**



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## **BULGARIA**

### **ALLEGED ILL-TREATMENT OF TSETSKA BLAGOEVA BY POLICE OFFICERS IN THE MONTANA REGION**

#### **Amnesty International's concerns**

Amnesty International is concerned about a further report of the ill-treatment of Roma by police officers in Montana<sup>1</sup>. Tsetska Gospodinova Blagoeva was allegedly beaten by police officers on 23 January 1998. If confirmed, this incident would represent a violation of Hungary's international treaty obligations, including Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 3 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which state that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

#### **Background**

According to information received from the Human Rights Project<sup>2</sup>, on 23 January 1998, in Vulchedrom, five police officers came to the home of Tsetska Gospodinova Blagoeva, a

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<sup>1</sup>For previous reports of ill-treatment of Roma in Montana by police officers see *Bulgaria: reported ill-treatment of Roma in the Montana region* (AI Index: EUR 15/09/97), published in September 1997.

<sup>2</sup>A Bulgarian non-governmental organization concerned with violation of the human rights of Roma.

28-year-old woman from the local Romani community. They allegedly asked her about the theft of aluminium scrap from a neighbouring yard. Tsetska Blagoeva and another woman who was visiting her were reportedly threatened that they would be beaten if they did not confess to the alleged crime. Two police officers<sup>3</sup> then reportedly slapped Tsetska Blagoeva and hit her with a truncheon on the back. The other woman was also allegedly beaten on the back with a truncheon. Having failed to extract confessions from the two women, the police officers left the house.

Several days later, one of the police officers involved reportedly returned to Tsetska Blagoeva's house and told Blagoyi Blagoev, her brother, that the police had known that the two women did not commit the theft and only wanted to find out the identity of the real perpetrators. Tsetska Blagoeva filed a complaint about the ill-treatment with the Montana Regional Department for Internal Affairs.

### **Amnesty International's recommendations**

Amnesty International urges the Bulgarian authorities to ensure that the investigation into this incident is carried out promptly and impartially, as required by Article 12 of the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Convention against Torture) which has been ratified by Bulgaria, that the findings are made public and that anyone found responsible for human rights violations is brought to justice.

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<sup>3</sup>The full names of the officers are known to Amnesty International.