

ALBANIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGENTLY APPEALS TO ALL SIDES IN ALBANIA NOT TO KILL OR TORTURE DETAINEES

All sides involved in the Albanian conflict should uphold fundamental human rights by respecting the right to life and to be free from torture or ill-treatment of anyone detained during the current situation, Amnesty International said today.

The breakdown of law and order in many parts of Albania opens the way to serious violations of human rights by forces attempting to impose state authority and by those opposing or defying this authority -- a danger that is further increased as looting of arms has made weaponry ever more widely available to the population.

"We appeal to all concerned to respect fundamental principles of human rights and humanitarian law, *which are applicable to all persons, at all times and in all circumstances, whether in time of peace or armed conflict,*" Amnesty International said.

These principles are reflected in human rights treaties to which Albania is a party, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and in common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, to which Albania is also a party.

"These fundamental principles require humane treatment of all persons not taking any part in hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms or who have been rendered unable to fight by sickness, wounds, detention or other reasons," Amnesty International said.

The human rights organization called on the government forces and armed opposition groups to refrain from committing the following acts against these persons:

- violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture,
- outrages upon personal dignity and humiliating and degrading treatment,
- taking of hostages, and detaining prisoners of conscience.

Amnesty International calls on all Albanians to remember that by respecting the human rights of others, they will be working towards the protection of their own fundamental rights.
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