

Public

---

**amnesty international**

---

# **BULGARIA**



**New cases of ill-treatment  
of Roma**

**18 August 1998**  
**AI Index: EUR 15/11/98**

**INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 8DJ, UNITED KINGDOM**

# **BULGARIA**

## **New cases of ill-treatment of Roma**

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

Amnesty International continues to receive numerous reports of police ill-treatment of Roma in Bulgaria<sup>1</sup>. Over the years, various Bulgarian governments have failed to implement Amnesty International's extensive recommendations to ensure that all allegations of torture or ill-treatment are investigated promptly and impartially and that those found responsible for human rights violations are brought to justice. Amnesty International has also repeatedly protested to the Bulgarian authorities about the harassment of victims who had filed complaints. These acts have never been officially acknowledged by the authorities and no information has been made available regarding the steps they have taken to ensure the safety of the complainants and witnesses.

This report is based on information received from the Human Rights Project, a Bulgarian non-governmental organization which is concerned with the protection of the rights of Romani people, criminal complaints filed by the victims of the alleged police ill-treatment and forensic medical evidence which was made available to Amnesty International.

### **Reported police ill-treatment of the Romani community in Mechka**

On 10 July 1998 at around 7pm approximately 80 police officers wearing helmets and shields raided 15 houses in the Romani neighbourhood in the village of Mechka, in the Pleven region. They reportedly beat over 30 men, women and children indiscriminately with truncheons and intentionally caused damage to doors, windows and furniture. Although the motives for the raid are not clear one report claimed that on the same afternoon a Romani woman had struck a police officer in a dispute.

According to reports, the police did not present search warrants but entered Romani houses by force and indiscriminately beat everyone inside and used racist

---

<sup>1</sup>For past reports see *Bulgaria: Torture and ill-treatment of Roma* (AI Index: EUR 15/03/93), published in May 1993, *Bulgaria: Turning a blind eye to racism* (AI Index: EUR 15/04/94), published in September 1994, *Bulgaria: Shootings, deaths in custody, torture and ill-treatment* (AI Index: EUR 15/07/96) published in June 1996, *Bulgaria: Reported ill-treatment of Roma in the Montana region* (AI Index: EUR 15/09/97) published in September 1997.

language. At least 15 people were injured; the oldest victim is aged 67 and the youngest is aged 11.

Mehmed Yusufov, one of the victims of the alleged ill-treatment, claims that at approximately 6.30pm seven police officers came to his house and searched it. They then gave him written notice that the search had been completed and left. Half an hour later police officers reportedly surrounded the house, kicked down the door, broke the windows and beat Mehmed Yusufov and Gyula Alieva Yusufova, his 58-year-old wife, with truncheons. According to a forensic medical certificate issued on 14 July 1998, Mehmed Yusufov suffered bruises on the back, the left side of the abdomen and chest, the left arm and elbow, left thumb and the left calf. Gyula Alieva Yusufova suffered bruising on the back, the right side of the abdomen and on the right palm.

Ali Yusufov, who is 67 years old, was on his way to his home when he was stopped by police officers. They reportedly beat him on the head and all over his body with truncheons. A forensic medical certificate issued on 13 July 1998 describes a fractured rib, lacerations on the nose and the right temple, multiple weals (between nine and 17 centimetres in length and 1.5 centimetres wide) on the back and massive bruising on the legs.

Emine Ismailova states that police officers came to her house and beat her on the back and all over her legs with truncheons. The officers allegedly also took away her television because she did not have a receipt of purchase, cut the tires on her cart, broke the house windows and broke a framed photograph of her dead husband.

Fifteen-year-old Asan Aliev Sherifov was reportedly beaten on the arms with truncheons and kicked on the legs. He was examined the same day and the forensic medical certificate describes lacerations on the shins of both legs and bruising on the left armpit and elbow.

Eleven-year-old Shukri Aliev was helping his uncle to bring home their flock of sheep. As they entered the yard, where they were leading the sheep, more than 10 police officers came to their house and reportedly started to beat Shukri's uncle. One officer hit Shukri Aliev on the right hand with a truncheon and then pushed him, making him fall on the concrete pavement. The boy does not remember what happened afterwards. He was later treated for a broken finger on his right hand and lesions on the right side of the forehead, nose and right temple which he suffered as a result of the beating and the fall.

Yusein Aliev Rasimov, Shukri Aliev's uncle, was beaten with truncheons and kicked on the head and all over the rest of his body. A forensic medical certificate describes two lacerations on the head, bruising on the left side of the chest, left elbow right shoulder and right shin, injuries which are consistent with his allegations of ill-treatment.

Memish Rasimov Yusufov, who is 48 years old and suffers from a serious heart condition for which he receives disability payments, was particularly vulnerable as he was unable to protect himself from the alleged police ill-treatment. A medical certificate describes multiple weals on his back, which he reportedly suffered as a result of beatings with truncheons.

The victims who were interviewed by representatives of the Human Rights Project state that immediately after the raid they went to the local doctor, whose identity is known to Amnesty International, to obtain referrals for medical treatment in the regional hospital in Pleven. The doctor reportedly refused to assist them saying that the police had forbidden him to do so. Three days later 15 people obtained forensic medical certificates from a specialist in Pleven for the injuries which they reportedly suffered as a result of ill-treatment. At least nine people submitted complaints about ill-treatment to the Pleven Military Prosecutor. Since the complaints were made, police officers allegedly visit the neighbourhood frequently and threaten the victims to make them withdraw their complaints.

Two other similar incidents also occurred at the beginning of 1998, according to reports received by Amnesty International. On 23 March in Krivodol, following a fight between a Romani man and a police officer, approximately 15 police officers came to the Romani neighbourhood and reportedly repeatedly fired their guns in the air and indiscriminately beat people. At least 10 Roma reportedly suffered injuries.

On 21 April at around 4pm in Septemvri approximately 20 police officers, in the course of an action to apprehend three Romani men, reportedly indiscriminately beat people who were on the streets in the Romani neighbourhood. At least three people who suffered injuries as a result of alleged ill-treatment were examined by forensic medical experts. The three detained Roma were taken to the police station where they were reportedly beaten by seven police officers before being released later that evening. None of the victims filed a complaint with the local prosecutor. Human rights activists and representatives of a local Romani organization met with the police on several occasions in order to calm the tensions in the neighbourhood after the incident

## **Other cases of reported ill-treatment of Roma**

### **The reported ill-treatment of Angel Hristov Marinov**

On 30 January 1998 at around 11am in Veliki Preslav, in the Varna region, Angel Marinov, a 24-year-old Rom, went to a near-by forest to collect dry firewood. He was stopped by four police officers who reportedly beat him with truncheons and punched him. They then took him to the Roma cemetery where three other officers were waiting. Angel Marinov was reportedly beaten again by the police officers who, when they released him, told him to come to the police station two hours later.

At around 2pm Angel Marinov and his sister Milena Marinova went to the Veliki Preslav Regional Police Department. Milena Marinova asked to meet the police director. Meanwhile, Angel Marinov was called into an office where he was reportedly beaten by a police officer, who forced him to sign a statement confessing to illegally felling trees. Angel Marinov claimed that he had not engaged in any illegal activity and had not been carrying any wood when he was stopped by the police.

Milena Marinova was also allegedly ill-treated by a police officer while waiting to meet the police director to whom she subsequently complained. Angel and Milena Marinova also filed complaints about the police ill-treatment with the Varna Military Prosecutor. According to a forensic medical certificate issued on 3 February 1998 in Shumen, Angel Hristov Marinov suffered bruising and slight swellings on the left cheek-bone, on the back of the right wrist and the left knee as well as 12 bruises on the back. It was established that the injuries described were consistent with the reported time and manner of ill-treatment.

### **The reported ill-treatment of Veliko Bonev Velikov**

On 4 March 1998 at around 12 pm in the village of Gorno Alexandrovo, in the Burgas region, Veliko Bonev Velikov was summoned by a telephone call to the mayor's office. When he got there he was questioned by Sergeant D.<sup>2</sup>, the local police officer, about the theft of a horse. Veliko Velikov denied having any

---

<sup>2</sup>The full name of the police officer is known to Amnesty International.

knowledge of the theft and was subsequently allegedly insulted and kicked in the chest and back by the police officer. The officer then ordered him to kneel down and beat him with a shovel handle on the soles of the feet, the back and the hands. The same officer reportedly verbally abused him and threatened to kill him if he had lied. Another police officer, before releasing him, reportedly threatened to beat Veliko Velikov if he did not find out for the police the identity of the thief.

The following day Veliko Velikov was examined by a local doctor who established that his right hand had been fractured and that he had suffered multiple bruising all over his body. On 11 March 1998 Veliko Velikov filed a complaint about the police ill-treatment with the Sliven Military Prosecutor.

### **The reported ill-treatment of 10 Romani men in the village of Bahovitsa<sup>3</sup>**

On 5 March 1998 at around 3am the mayor of the village of Bahovitsa, his two sons, and two other men came to the house of Vesko Dikov Kalinov, a 53-year-old Rom. They took him, his son Georgi Kalinov and Mitko Likov to the mayor's office to interrogate them about the theft of a lamb. One of the mayor's sons reportedly threatened them that, if they did not find the lamb, Kalinov's house and the houses of other Roma would be set on fire, and they would be expelled from the village. Later, three other Roma, Boris Mihailov, Ivan Borisov, and Marin Borisov, were also brought in for questioning.

At around 3.30am, in front of his office, the mayor, his son and a police officer stopped a car containing Ivan Mitkov Markov, Krassimir Mikhailov, Yulian Ventsislavov and Mikhail Yordanov, all Roma from the near-by town of Ugarchin. Assuming that this was a routine check, Mihail Yordanov, the driver of the car, presented his driving license. The mayor then reportedly pulled him out of the car, ordered him to put his hands on top of the car and searched him. Vesko Kalinov, Mitko Likov and Georgi Kalinov, who were locked up in the mayor's office, saw one

---

<sup>3</sup>Amnesty International has also received information about police ill-treatment cases where the victims were unwilling or, for other reasons, unable to file complaints or to obtain medical evidence for injuries which they suffered as a result of the alleged ill-treatment. Amnesty International wishes to remind the Bulgarian authorities that the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Convention against Torture) as well as the Bulgarian Penal Code stipulate that all reports of torture and ill-treatment should be investigated, even if no complaint has been made.

of the mayor's sons strike and kick two of the Roma standing in front of the car. The four Romani men from Ugarchin were then taken into the mayor's office where the mayor and one of his sons continued to beat them in front of the other detained men. At around 4am the men from Ugarchin were taken by police car to the Lovech Regional Police Department, where the beating reportedly continued. The other Romani men were released at around 5am.

### **The reported ill-treatment of Rossen Valentinov Alekov, Rossen Krassimirov and Emil Assenov**

On 10 March 1998 three Roma teenagers from Shumen were allegedly ill-treated by police officers. Fifteen-year-old Rossen Valentinov Alekov, 16-year-old Rossen Krassimirov, 17-year-old Rumen Asparuhov, and 18-year-old Emil Assenov went to Varna to visit a friend called Asko. They all spent the evening in a local restaurant where a dispute with the owner reportedly occurred regarding the late payment of the bill. Afterwards Rossen Alekov, Rossen Krassimirov and Emil Assenov went to spend the night in the house of Asko's mother, while Asko and Rumen Asparuhov stayed with relatives near-by. At around 6am two police officers came to the house and arrested Rossen Alekov, Rossen Krassimirov and Emil Assenov and took them to the Varna Third Regional Police Department. Rossen Krassimirov and Emil Assenov were reportedly beaten in the car on the way to the police station. At the Third Regional Police Department, Rossen Alekov and Rossen Krassimirov were ordered to stand at opposite ends of a corridor with their arms raised above their heads. They were then reportedly beaten consecutively with a wooden baton and punched by a police officer who they identified as stoutly built. Rossen Alekov and Rossen Krassimirov were questioned about Asko's whereabouts and Rossen Alekov was allegedly also beaten by a plainclothes officer who also questioned him and did not believe him that he was a minor and did not have an identity document (internal passport<sup>4</sup>). The two officers allegedly took turns to beat him and, after the stout officer reportedly hit him with the baton on the head, he lost consciousness. The officers reportedly splashed him with water to revive him and then the beating continued. Other plainclothes or uniformed officers passing in the corridor also verbally abused, punched and kicked the Romani boys. They were released at around 3.30pm when Rossen Alekov's parent, who had been contacted by the police, came to the station.

---

<sup>4</sup>Minors younger than 16 are not required by law to possess an internal passport.



Two days later a forensic medical expert in Shumen, who examined Rossen Alekov, described the following injuries in a medical certificate: a swelling and lesion on the left ankle, lesion on the right side of the abdomen below the ribs, a haematoma on the chest, bruising of the right knee, left shoulder-blade, backs of both thighs and buttocks, a slight swelling to the back of the neck and a swelling three and a half centimetres in diameter on the top of the head.

### **The reported ill-treatment of Hyussein Mehmedov and Ahmed Mehmedov**

On 11 March 1998 at around 10am in Ruets, near Trgovishte, two police officers arrested Hyussein Hyusseinov Mehmedov, a 30-year-old Rom, at his home and took him to the Trgovishte Regional Police Department. He was questioned about the theft of some domestic animals and other goods. After he denied having committed any offence, police officers reportedly beat him to make him confess to the crimes. Finally, after being beaten from 12pm to 3.30pm, he signed a 'confession' and was detained pending an investigation.

The following day at around 11am three police officers arrested his brother Ahmed Hyusseinov Mehmedov, who was reportedly also beaten and forced to confess to several acts of theft. On 13 March they repeated their 'confessions' before an investigator and were released at around 4pm. The brothers were reportedly fined for the offences.

### **The reported ill-treatment of Sergei and Peter Panchev Georgiev**

On 19 May 1998 at around 8.30am in Beglezh, near Pleven, a dozen guards armed with guns, bars and truncheons came to the house of Katya Assenova Ivanova. The guards, who were reportedly hired by the village mayor, allegedly beat Katya Ivanova's sons Sergei and Peter Panchev Georgiev, 22 and 24 years old respectively, handcuffed them and took them to the mayor's office. The beatings continued until 5pm, while the brothers were questioned about an incident in a bar in which they were reportedly involved earlier that day. At around 3pm a police officer from Pleven arrived and also beat the two detained Romani men with a truncheon. At around 5.30pm they were taken to Pleven and reportedly forced to sign a statement which they had not previously read. Shortly after their arrest Tsonka Georgieva, Sergei and Peter's sister, went to the mayor's office where a guard allegedly hit her on the arm. She and her mother Katya Assenova Ivanova then went to complain to the Regional Prosecutor's Office in Pleven. The next day, when Katya Assenova Ivanova went to the local police to file a complaint, the officer on duty reportedly reprimanded her for

speaking to the prosecutor and told her “There will be no more peace for you in this village”.

Since then, on an almost daily basis, guards have reportedly come to Katya Assenova Ivanova’s house and threatened the family. Other similar incidents have reportedly occurred in the village but the Roma are afraid to complain because they have been threatened that their homes will be set on fire.

A forensic medical expert in Pleven examined Tsonka Pancheva Georgieva on 25 May 1998 and described in a certificate the bruising on her left elbow. A medical certificate issued to Peter Georgiev, following an examination, describes weals on the left shoulder blade, back and lower back, a swelling on the back of the left shoulder and bruises on the left arm and thumb. Sergei Georgiev suffered lesions on both shoulders, right elbow and right thigh, three haematomas on the front of the neck and a swollen left forearm. Sergei and Peter Georgiev subsequently filed a complaint about the police ill-treatment with the Pleven Military Prosecutor.

### **The reported ill-treatment of Emil Angelov Balevski and Yulian Emilov Angelov**

On 31 May 1998 at around 2am in a discotheque in Beglezh, near Pleven, a dozen guards beat and kicked Emil Angelov Balevski and his 17-year-old son Yulian Emilov Angelov. The village mayor, who employs the guards, and a police officer who works in the region were present in the discotheque and reportedly took no steps to protect Emil Balevski and his son, who went home after the beating. At around 4am a police inspector from Pleven took Emil Balevski to the mayor’s office. One of the seven guards present reportedly touched Emil Balevski’s chin with a baton and told him “Dirty gypsy, we shall put you through the meat-chopping machine”. Two guards then reportedly beat him on the palms of the hands with batons and kicked him. The beating stopped when the mayor arrived. Before he was released Emil Balevski was reportedly made to sign a statement that he had not been ill-treated.

On 2 June 1998 a forensic medical expert established that as a result of the alleged beating Emil Balevski suffered a massive swelling and bruising on the left side of the face, particularly the cheek, massive multiple haematomas on the back, especially on the upper left side, and also on the left arm and right hand. Yulian Angelov suffered a cut on the head behind the right ear, lacerations on the neck, and bruising on the upper lip. They subsequently filed a complaint about the ill-treatment with the Pleven Military Prosecutor.

### **The reported ill-treatment of Beisin Hasan Ahmet and Dzhevdet Hiyazi**

On 23 March 1998 on the motorway from Veliko Trnovo to Sofia two police officers stopped Beisin Ahmed and Dzhevdet Hiyazi, two Romani men from Veliko Trnovo who were reportedly searching for copper scraps beside the road. After ordering them to lie on the ground, the officers reportedly kicked them and beat them. One of the police officers pointed his gun at Beisin Ahmed's back and shot him at close range. Another police patrol took the injured man to the hospital and the two officers continued to beat Dzhevdet Hiyazi. They also reportedly hung him by his feet from a nearby bridge.

Beisin Ahmed was later transferred from a local hospital to Sofia where a rubber bullet was surgically removed from his lungs.



Amnesty International is concerned that, if confirmed, these incidents of ill-treatment would represent a violation of Bulgaria's international treaty obligations. These include 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.

As a State Party to the Convention against Torture, Bulgaria is bound to initiate a prompt and impartial investigation whenever an individual has alleged that torture or other ill-treatment has occurred or, even if no complaint has been made, there are reasonable grounds to believe that such ill-treatment has occurred. Amnesty International urges the Bulgarian authorities to ensure that the investigations into the above incidents of ill-treatment are thorough and impartial, that the findings are made public, and that anyone responsible for human rights violations is brought to justice.

Amnesty International is also concerned that the alleged harassment of many of the victims of ill-treatment, if confirmed, would be in violation of Article 13 of the Convention against Torture, which obliges Bulgaria to take measures which would ensure "that the complainant and witnesses are protected against all ill-treatment or intimidation as a consequence of his complaint or any evidence given". Amnesty

International is seeking information on the steps taken by the Bulgarian authorities to protect these victims and their families from further police harassment.