

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Media Briefing

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## **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Stories of suffering in Tetovo**

The following document highlights cases and testimonies from Amnesty International's report *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Dark Days in Tetovo*. This report examines some of the specific abuses of human rights and of humanitarian law that occurred in the Tetovo region, one of the main centres of the fighting, during the most active phase of the conflict from March to September 2001.

### **Human rights violations committed by the authorities**

#### **Poroj, 6 April 2001**

Thirty-four men were arrested by the police and many of them were allegedly beaten. Amnesty International's report documents detailed interviews with four of the men detained who were severely beaten. All of the men were reluctant to make complaints to the police of arbitrary arrest or ill-treatment. One of them said:

*"Such a complaint will not be taken into account. Even worse, you have to pay dearly for it... At the police station, someone asked for a certificate that he had been at the police station and that he was released. They said, 'You can get this in the morning, but you can't be sure that you will be alive in the morning'. So no one asked for that again. That is our police. So, I do not dare to go to the police to file a complaint."*

#### **Djepchiste and Poroj, 24 May 2001**

A number of homes were raided by the police. Amnesty International interviewed four of the men arrested that day. Nasir Jonuzi, aged 41, a teacher, mayor of Djepchiste and a member of the council said:

*"They thought that they had found some documentation... I explained that these documents had nothing to do with the NLA. Then they started to ask where I had the arms... I was kept 30 hours without food or drink. I was bound to a table, with a sack over my head so that I could not see who beat me, and I was then beaten on the head and on the back. In the yard the beating lasted 10 minutes but in Veles about 20 hours. The people who beat me were replaced many times. The interrogator was changed every six hours. The torturers more often."*

#### **Leshok, 19 July 2001**

Three ethnic Albanian men were stopped at a police checkpoint and taken to a security police building in Skopje. The father of one of the men described their treatment:

*"They were all tortured. They were in separate rooms but each could hear the screams of the other. After four hours of beating, they were all brought back to the taxi to check it again. There were lots of inspectors and police around in the yard of the building. The police fetched two passers-by from the street as*

witnesses. When they searched the car they found six hand grenades and three fuses... Then they were taken back to the basement and tortured for another 25 hours."

### **Abuses committed by the National Liberation Army**

#### **Neproshtento, 24 July 2001**

Vasko Mihailovski was reportedly abducted on 24 July 2001, the day after his wedding, at his home in Neproshteno. He is one of the 13 ethnic Macedonians alleged to have been taken captive by the NLA who are still missing. It is feared that he may have been unlawfully killed.

#### **Zhillce, 25 July 2001**

Civilians who tried to help find those who were abducted during July 2001 also risked abuses. A man helping the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to deliver aid in Zhillce described what happened to him when a mother asked him to help her child and two other children and their mother .

*"Twenty armed Albanians appeared from behind me and attacked me. I was hit with the butt of a rifle and they started to beat me... The attackers were in uniforms, with NLA [National Liberation Army] badges, berets, their faces were not covered. They put a mask over my head and handcuffed my hands behind me... [D]ifferent people came and beat us for two to three hours. They kicked me and hit me with wooden sticks... on the back and shoulders."*

#### **Leshok, 8 August 2001**

Even the presence of representatives from international agencies did not prevent civilians from being abducted. A man who was returning to his village in an international convoy described how he was abducted and treated by the NLA:

*"They put us for half an hour in a shed for animals in Leshok and asked our names and insulted us. Then I was beaten. Three ribs and my jaw were broken. My uncle was older so he was not beaten so much. They covered my head which was bleeding. The people who did this to us had military uniforms and masks. "*

**To see the full report *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Dark Days in Tetovo*, please visit:  
<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/recent/eur650072002>**

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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