AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
PUBLIC STATEMENT

Kosovo: No justice for the February 2007 killings

On the second anniversary of the unlawful killing of Mon Balaj and Arben Xheladini Amnesty International calls for an end to impunity for members of a Romanian police unit believed to be responsible for their deaths.

Mon Balaj and Arben Xheladini were killed during a Vetëvendosje demonstration in the capital Pristina on 10 February 2007, when members of a Romanian Formed Police Unit under the control of United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) police fired rubber bullets at the demonstrators. Others including Zenel Zeneli, Mustafë Nerjovaj and Hysni Hyseni were seriously injured.

An internal UNMIK investigation in 2007 found that the cause of death of the protesters was the improper use of rubber bullets by unknown members of the Romanian police unit. By the time these conclusions had been drawn, members of the police unit had been repatriated. No independent criminal investigation by the Kosovo authorities has ever been opened into the killings. An investigation by a military prosecutor in Romania was not, as far as the organization has been informed, able to identify the perpetrators.

UNMIK, which remains in Kosovo under UN Security Council Resolution 1244/99, was mandated to re-establish the rule of law and respect for human rights in Kosovo. Amnesty International considers that the UN and contributing countries must ensure that all those responsible for human rights violations, criminal or other wrongful conduct should be held accountable, including through criminal prosecution, where appropriate.

A public hearing in a case brought against UNMIK by the parents of the two young men is due to be heard by the Human Rights Advisory Panel (HRAP) on 19 March. The HRAP was introduced by law in March 2006 to provide remedies for acts and omissions by UNMIK; it does not have powers to initiate a criminal investigation, but may recommend to UNMIK that such an investigation be initiated.

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