

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Montenegro: Newest UN state must stop torture and take action to bring police to justice

Amnesty International today called on the Montenegrin authorities to ensure that an investigation is promptly opened into allegations against police officers suspected of the torture and ill-treatment of 14 ethnic Albanians.

In statements by five of the 14 men provided to Amnesty International, they allege that they were subjected to ill-treatment, in some cases amounting to torture, during their arrest on 9 September 2006 and subsequently during detention at Podgorica police station and at Podgorica District Court.

The allegations include reports of repeated beatings, including with the intention of forcing a confession, using hands, fists, feet, sticks and on one occasion, a computer cable. Beatings were allegedly conducted by both individual and groups of police officers at the police station, by the anti-terrorist police involved in the arrest and by police escorting the men to court.

One individual reported that a hood was placed over his head; another that he had a gun held to his head; all were subjected to racist threats on the basis of their Albanian ethnicity.

Amnesty International is calling for full thorough and impartial investigations to be opened into the allegations against the police made in a criminal complaint submitted on behalf of five of the men. Similar allegations reportedly made by some of the other nine men to a local human rights organization should also be investigated. Any police officers found to be reasonably suspected of torture and ill-treatment should then be subject to appropriate criminal or disciplinary proceedings.

The organization urges Montenegro, as the most recent state to join the United Nations, to carry out its promise to uphold its international obligations, including under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Torture, ill-treatment and the extraction of confessions under duress - prohibited by the Convention - are also prohibited under the Montenegrin Criminal Code.

In a report on Serbia and Montenegro published on 18 May 2006, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture documented numerous allegations of torture and other ill-treatment from persons recently detained by the police in Montenegro and recommended to the authorities that all police officers be instructed that such ill-treatment should not be tolerated and that perpetrators would be subject to severe sanctions.

Amnesty International also calls on the authorities to ensure that investigations into the allegations against

the 14 ethnic Albanian men are promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigated, so that they may be charged with a recognisable criminal offence, or otherwise released.

Background

Some 17 ethnic Albanian men were arrested in the early hours of 9 September, on the eve of the Montenegrin parliamentary elections, as part of an “anti-terrorist” operation known as Eagles’ Flight (Orlov let). Fourteen of the men were subsequently detained for 30 days at Spuž prison for pre-trial detention, extended for another 30 days on 9 October. They include three US citizens who, according to their families, were visiting their relatives for the first time following Montenegro’s independence in June 2006.