

EXTERNAL

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Amnesty International

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AUSTRIA : THE ALLEGED ILL-TREATMENT OF VIOLETTA J.

The information on this case comes from a statement made by Violetta J. to the Viennese non-governmental organization *Romano Centro* on 26 April 1996 and from medical certificates.

On the 25 April 1996 Nicola J., Violetta's husband, was drinking with two friends in a Vienna bar when officers of the traffic police arrived to ask whom the car belonged to that was double-parked outside. When Nicola J. sought to intervene between the officers and his friend, whose car it was, one of the officers reportedly drew his handgun. Nicola J. rushed out of the bar and ran home. Shortly afterwards several police cars drew up outside the house where Nicola and Violetta J. live, and a number of officers stormed into their flat. Violetta J. alleges that the officers began to hit her husband, causing her three children - aged nine, eleven and 12 - to start crying. She also alleges that when she stood in front of the children to protect them, the officers began to hit her too. Medical examinations conducted on 26 and 27 April record that Violetta J.'s injuries included bruising of both elbows, left wrist, right hand, right thigh, left ankle, swelling to the head and to the upper jaw and upper lip. Both Violetta and Nicola J. state that police officers subjected them to racist abuse and asked them when they were "finally going to go home" ("*Wann fahrts ihr endlich nach Haus*"). Violetta J. and her husband, who are Roma, have been living in Austria for the past 16 years.

Violetta and Nicola J. were handcuffed and taken to a nearby police station where they were detained overnight. Their three children were reportedly left on their own in the flat all night. According to Violetta J. a doctor came to see her while she was in custody. However, he did not examine her, saying that it was not worth it just because of a few slaps.

Amnesty International understands that the hospital which examined Violetta J. has made a formal complaint about her alleged ill-treatment, as it is obliged to do under Austrian law. The *Romano Centro* has also raised her case with the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

Amnesty International is urging the Austrian authorities to investigate the alleged ill-treatment of Violetta J. thoroughly, speedily and impartially, to bring to justice anyone found guilty of ill-treating her, and to compensate her for the injuries inflicted upon her.