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Macedonia: Unlawful killings must be investigated

In view of the recent admission by the Macedonian government of the unlawful killings of six Pakistani and one Indian immigrants two years ago Amnesty International today called on the government to bring to justice all those involved in the killings and to ensure that the victims' relatives receive adequate compensation.

Earlier this month, the Macedonian government said the seven immigrants were deliberately killed as "terrorists" in order to appeal to the heightened post 11 September global tensions surrounding the issue of "terrorism". It charged the former Minister of the Interior Ljube Boshkovski and security officers in connection with the killings.

"Killing innocent immigrants in the name of perceived political interests is totally unacceptable."

"Unlawful killings are a violation of the basic right to life. This right is guaranteed by the Macedonian Constitution as well as by a number of international treaties the country is a party to," Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International urges the Macedonian government to ensure:

- Thorough and impartial investigation in the killings;
- Fair trial for the accused
- Adequate compensation for the relatives of the unlawfully killed immigrants;
- Respect of national law and international standards by law enforcement officers.

As soon as it learnt about the killings in 2002, Amnesty International expressed its concerns that the seven men may have been victims of extra-judicial executions and demanded an immediate independent and impartial investigation. While commending the authorities for finally acknowledging responsibility, the organization reminds the government of its obligation to ensure that those suspected of involvement be tried in fair trial proceedings.

Background

At about 4.00am on 2 March 2002 seven men, six Pakistani citizens and one Indian citizen, were shot dead in a police ambush in Rashtanski Lozja, near the village of Ljuboten, north of the capital Skopje. The Macedonian authorities claimed that the seven men were members of a foreign terrorist group. On 2 March the then Minister of the Interior, Ljube Boshkovski, announced that the seven had planned attacks on important buildings, foreign diplomats most probably from the US, Germany and the UK - those that

were involved in the fight against global terrorism.

Western diplomats in Skopje expressed doubts in the links of the immigrants with any international terrorist group.

For further information:

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur650122002>

Public Document

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