
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 229/94

TO: PRESS OFFICERSAI INDEX: NWS 11/229/94
FROM: IS PRESS OFFICEDISTR: SC/PO
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NEWS SERVICE ITEMS: EXTERNAL - **GREECE, ALBANIA, PAKISTAN** (These items are all for response only).

PLEASE NOTE: The researcher has suggested that the enclosed item on Greece may be of particular interest for the Canadian, Australian, German, French, UK, Netherlands and US sections as these countries have strong Greek/Macedonian communities or have groups working hard on Weran 19/94 from June.

INTERNAL

INTERNATIONAL NEWS RELEASES

** France - 0001 hrs GMT 12 October** - PLEASE NOTE EXACT EMBARGO TIME SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

Algeria - 25 October - PLEASE NOTE NEW DATE. SEE NEWS SERVICE 137/94

APEC - 3 November -SEE NEWS SERVICE 212/94

Iraq - 29 November - PLEASE NOTE THIS IS AN INTERNATIONAL RELEASE. (It was originally put in the targeted section by mistake) SEE NEWS SERVICE 212/94

TARGETED AND LIMITED NEWS RELEASES

Turkey - 14 October - SEE NEWS SERVICE 181/94

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AI INDEX: EUR 25/WU 03/94
EMBARGOED FOR 1300 hrs GMT 3 OCTOBER 1994

GREECE: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONCERNED ABOUT RESTRICTIONS ON RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Amnesty International is increasingly concerned about restrictions on the right to freedom of expression in Greece despite promises by the government to amend the relevant legislation. The legislation has been used against those expressing opinions about the existence of an ethnic Macedonian minority in Greece or criticizing the Greek Government's policy towards the neighbouring Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

On 5 October Christos Sideropoulos will be tried in Florina Court for Misdemeanours charged with "spreading false information which may cause disruption of the international relations of Greece". The charges are based on a statement he reportedly made in June 1990 at a press conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, held in parallel with a meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) on minority rights. Christos Sideropoulos reportedly declared to the journalists present that he belongs to the "Slav Macedonian" minority living in Greece and that his cultural rights were being violated.

Christos Sideropoulos is to be tried on charges which seriously breach his right to freedom of expression and violate Article 10 (1) of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, ratified by Greece in 1974, which states that:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers."

Amnesty International believes that if Christos Sideropoulos is imprisoned he will be a prisoner of conscience and would therefore appeal for his immediate and unconditional release.

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ALBANIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WRITES TO PRESIDENT ABOUT CONTINUING CONCERNS

In a letter sent today to the President Berisha of Albania, Amnesty International again raised its concerns about the trial and conviction in early September of five members of "Omonia", the Greek minority organization, on charges of espionage and illegal possession of arms. They were sentenced to between six and eight years' imprisonment.

"After studying the indictment and verdict, reports by international observers and press reports, we believe our concerns about lack of fair and open trial still stand," Amnesty International said.

The organization said it believed the court's findings were seriously undermined by the breaches of their right to a fair and open trial; and it also noted the weakness of the evidence produced in support of the espionage charges against them.

"These factors should all be taken into account by an appeal court", Amnesty International said.

In the same letter, Amnesty International also detailed other continuing human rights concerns in Albania following a September research visit to that country by a delegation from the organization.

During their visit, the delegation investigated reports of incidents in which Albanian police officers have beaten or otherwise ill-treated people.

"We were concerned that last year there was an increase in incidents of police abuses in Albania," Amnesty International said. "These abuses appear to be continuing largely unchecked, and no action appears to have been taken on the recommendations we made in a report on Albania last year".

The organization's delegates interviewed a number of former political prisoners from Tirana, Durres, Shkoder and Pogradec, who stated that they were beaten or otherwise ill-treated by police officers who had broken up their protest hunger strike in August this year. Amnesty International seriously questions the validity of a court order banning this strike, based on legislation dealing with industrial strikes.

Kurt Kola, one of the leaders of the hunger-strike, was reportedly subsequently placed under house arrest on charges of having failed to comply with the court order. The human rights organization urges that he is immediately release as his continued detention constitutes a violation of the right to freedom of assembly, association and expression as guaranteed by international treaties to which Albanian is party.

Amnesty International also has concerns about a number of the provisions of the Draft Penal Code which is shortly to be put before the People's Assembly for adoption.

These concerns include a great increase in the number of offenses which carry an optional death penalty. Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the fundamental right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The organization is urging that provisions of the

Draft Penal Code which provide for an optional death penalty be amended with a view to abolishing this punishment.

Amnesty International is also urging the elimination of Article 114 of the Draft Penal Code which penalizes homosexual acts between men with a fine or up to three years' imprisonment. It noted that these provisions would violate the principle of non-discrimination provided in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and would consider any adult imprisoned for engaging in consensual homosexual acts in private as prisoners of conscience.

Lastly, Amnesty International is concerned about certain provisions of the Draft Penal Code which it feared might unduly restrict the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

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PAKISTAN: OPPOSITION POLITICIAN RELEASED AFTER A MONTH'S "DISAPPEARANCE"

Amnesty International has been informed that Shaukat Ali Kashmiri, the Secretary General of Jammu and Kashmir People's National Party (JKPNP) has been released from an army detention centre at Attok Fort on 26 September 1994, one month after his "disappearance" on 26 August.

"We welcome the news of Mr Kashmiri's release, but our request to the Government of Pakistan for the establishment of an impartial inquiry into this incident still stands".

Amnesty International is urging the Government of Pakistan to act now to bring to justice those found to have been responsible for Shaukat Ali Kashmiri's "disappearance" between 26 August and 26 September, and to ensure that Pakistan's security personnel do not carry out any further "disappearances".

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