

reportedly assaulted and seriously injured by a bodyguard of the leader and presidential candidate for the Radical Party and Mayor of the Belgrade municipality of Zemun. Information received indicated that the lawyer defends many politically unpopular clients in the former Yugoslavia, including both ethnic Croats and Serbs as well as Albanians. Information also indicated that the lawyer had spoken out publicly against the authorities' policy of ethnically motivated evictions. At the time the report was prepared the government had not responded.

Religious intolerance, Special Rapporteur on:

(E/CN.4/1998/6, paras. 48, 50, 64, 95)

The report refers to violations of freedom of religion and belief against Judaism, and notes that in Zemun (district of Belgrade) a Jewish cemetery was reportedly desecrated and a publicly owned synagogue rented out and rebuilt even though it was a protected historic building.

Torture, Special Rapporteur on: (E/CN.4/1998/38, paras. 214–217; E/CN.4/1998/38/Add.1, paras. 482–493)

The Special Rapporteur (SR) referred to information indicating that police personnel in many areas frequently resorted to the use of force for the purpose of obtaining information or "confessions" or as a means of informal punishment. The methods of included beatings with fists, police clubs, or other wooden or metal clubs; striking the victim's head against the wall, floor or automobile; and electric shocks. Beatings were said to be applied typically to the head and sensitive parts of the body, such as the soles of the feet and kidney areas. Police inflicting beatings were said often to place bullet-proof vests upon victims, so as to reduce the visible evidence of physical injury.

Information also indicated that law enforcement officers often threatened victims of abuse to dissuade them from filing complaints about their treatment or to prompt them to drop charges once they were filed. In some instances, police had reportedly initiated proceedings against victims in reprisal for charges filed against police personnel. In addition, the public prosecutors' offices were said frequently to fail to take action on criminal complaints against police officers, and to fail to give notice of dismissal of complaints or to meet time limits for initiating action on the complaints. When proceedings did take place involving charged police officers, the presence of the accused officers in court was said to be often impossible to secure, as the court may only request that the accused officer's superiors secure their presence. Judicial officials allegedly often failed to act independently, by accepting police officers' accounts at face value, while questioning extensively the alleged victim. Guilty verdicts against police officers were said almost always to result in suspended sentences.

Cases transmitted to the government concerned, *inter alia*: death resulting from torture, noting the government's response that a complaint had been lodged against three officers of the Ministry of Interior and one police officer and an investigation begun; a case in which

a complaint was filed with the Novi Pazar district public prosecutor's office against state security officers, noting the government's response that an investigation had been initiated but the criminal charges against the security officers dropped since they were brought eight months after the alleged offence, the doctor's certificate appeared not to be officially registered and the plaintiff had not contested this decision; and a case in which the government stated that the victim had confessed to the crime of theft and had not referred to the use of force or intimidation. Other cases transmitted concerned: an instance in which the government stated that since no traces of violence or any other proof had been discovered on the alleged victim's body, and as the police officers had denied the charge, no proceedings had been initiated; abuse of an army reservist by six military police officers so as to get him to confess to stealing and selling a missing rifle, noting the government's response that the military prosecutor of Ni had filed a complaint against a military officer for the offence of extortion of testimony; and, a deputy to the federal parliament who was allegedly beaten unconscious and suffered a severe concussion during a protest action in Kragujevac, noting the government's response that complaints had been filed against a number of police officers on charges of abuse of duty, and the charges had been dropped since recourse to physical force had not been found illegal in the circumstances.

The SR also sent two urgent appeals to the government. The first concerned a number of demonstrators said to have been ill treated by police officials. The second concerned a group of 350 ethnic Albanians, including participants, journalists and bystanders, at peaceful demonstrations in October 1997 in several towns in Kosovo.

OTHER THEMATIC REPORTS

Children affected by armed conflict, Special Representative: (A/53/482, paras. 43, 84–101)

The Special Representative (SRep) made a three-day visit to the FRY from 10 to 12 September 1998; of which two days were spent in Kosovo. The visit had three objectives: first, to witness first-hand the humanitarian situation in Kosovo and, in particular, to assess the impact of the ongoing violence on children; second, to witness the situation of Serbian refugee children in the FRY, most of whose families had earlier fled from Bosnia and Herzegovina and from Croatia; and third, to assess the impact of the ongoing sanctions regime on children in the FRY.

On the basis of the visit the SRep called on the international community and the FRY government to take immediate political action, involving a three-pronged response: provision of increased humanitarian relief to displaced populations, especially the 50,000 children, women, and elderly who were stranded in the mountains and the woods, and to local host families who took large numbers of displaced persons into their homes; return of displaced populations, involving an increased international humanitarian presence on the ground in Kosovo to serve as a confidence-building measure, reassure returnees and serve as a deterrent against future abuse