

Podgorica, 20 February 2007

Joint press release by 27 non-governmental organizations in reaction to the statement issued by the Police Directorate

THE POLICE MUST TO PROTECT PERSONAL DIGNITY, FREEDOM AND RIGHTS

Non-governmental organisations dedicated to the promotion of human rights in Montenegro protest against the statement by the Police Directorate published on 17/02/2007 in daily "Vijesti", and express their disappointment with the Police Directorate, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs for their failure to condemn or correct the statement by the Chief of the Directorate, and their obvious disregard for the Law on Police which defines the police as a force that primarily strives to protect the constitutional freedoms and rights of citizens, with respect to the international standards and regulations protecting personal dignity, freedom and rights of citizens (Article 2 of the Law on Police).

Statement issued by the Police Directorate reflects principle „goal justifies mean“, since it underlines the existence of weapon and alleged criminal act of terrorism in the context of accusations for torture, despite the fact that neither domestic nor international law allow any justification of the ill-treatment: torture, or brutal and humiliating treatment is forbidden.

Respect for the international law prohibiting torture requires effective investigation of every appeal against such treatment, which is why we urge the State Prosecutor to finally react and conduct an effective, impartial investigation of the accusations of torture by persons deprived of freedom in the police action "Eagle's Flight", five months after their appeals have been submitted, and to inform the public on the outcomes of the investigation. Only afterwards will we be able to assess whether the statements of the alleged victims have been false, whether the statements by the family members of the arrested persons are also false and whether the policemen have submitted them to humiliating treatment or not. In the meantime, it is an incontestable, unambiguous right and a duty of the media and the researchers of the violations of human rights to report their findings to the public, which public should hopefully also be the chief concern of the police in a democratic state of Montenegro?!

Finally, in response to the scornful reference of our colleague Aleksandar Saša Zeković, we emphasises that all of us are "self-proclaimed", "self-organised" representatives of the civil society working to bring Montenegro closer to the European organisations and international standards which are so proudly listed in the Law on Police. The difference is that our engagement, as well as the engagement of Zeković, who is also a member of the Council for the Civic Control of Police, is voluntary, whereas for the Police it is a duty. Unfortunately, such inadequate reactions on the part of the Police Directorate prove that voluntary engagement of the entire non-governmental sector is still of dire importance to Montenegro.

1. Montenegrin Committee of Human Rights Lawyers, Rožaje
2. Safe Women's House, Podgorica
3. Centre for Civic Education (CCE), Podgorica,
4. Centre for Inter-Ethnic Relations and Minority Rights – PAX, Ulcinj
5. Centre for Development of Non-Governmental Organisations (CDNGO), Podgorica
6. Anima, Kotor
7. Centre for Monitoring (CEMI), Podgorica
8. Centre for Civic Initiatives (CCI), Kolašin
9. Human Rights Action, Podgorica
10. Bonum, Pljevlja
11. Parliament of the Montenegrin Youth, Podgorica
12. Unitas, Tuzi
13. Women's group Stella, Cetinje
14. European Movement in Montenegro, Podgorica
15. NVO club Civic Home, Cetinje
16. Roma Scholarship Foundation, Podgorica
17. Artis, Ulcinj
18. Network of Committees for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Podgorica
19. New Horizons, Ulcinj
20. Nansen Dialogue Centre, Podgorica
21. Croatian House, Kotor
22. Independent Union of Albanian Students in Montenegro, Tuzi
23. Human Rights Group, Podgorica
24. Start, Nikšić
25. NGO coalition „Roma Circle“, Podgorica
26. Bona Fides, Bar
27. Manus feminae, Podgorica