

EXTERNAL

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UA 25/97 Ill-treatment, possible prisoners of conscience 24 January 1997

FEDERAL REPUBLIC Zoran Simonovi_, deputy to federal parliament
OF YUGOSLAVIASrdjan Nedeljkovi_, journalist
and opposition activists and supporters (in Kragujevac)

Milan Kaljevi_, Vljako Stoj_i_, Milenko Djuki_,
Mane Zatezalo and Radiša Savi_ (in Smederevo)

Marko Petrovi_ (in Kraljevo)

Dragan Nikoli_ (in Jagodina)

On 23 January 1997 opposition activists and supporters in a number of towns in Serbia were arrested or beaten by police after the opposition coalition *Zajedno* (Together) called for a traffic blockade throughout Serbia.

In Kragujevac, where the opposition victory has not been disputed by the authorities, police stormed the building of the local radio-television station after the newly installed *Zajedno* city authorities appointed a new board of directors, thus breaking the Serbian Socialist Party's almost total monopoly on local information. The acting director of the radio-television station, author Vidosav Stefanovi_, called on residents of Kragujevac to block access to the town. Police reportedly beat with truncheons residents sitting on the ground or on their cars who refused to move. Zoran Simonovi_, a paediatrician and opposition deputy of the federal parliament, was reportedly beaten unconscious and suffered severe concussion. He is believed to have regained consciousness, but remains in hospital. Several others were reportedly taken to the city hospital for treatment for their injuries. Up to 15 people sustained minor injuries. An Associated Press sound engineer, Srdjan Nedeljkovi_, received a blow in the stomach and a colleague had his camera taken and the film removed from it.

Later in the day it was reported that a compromise agreement had been reached between the new directors' board and the Serbian Ministry of Information.

In Smederevo five officials of the *Zajedno* coalition (Srdjan Nedeljkovi_, Milan Kaljevi_, Vljako Stoj_i_, Milenko Djuki_, Mane Zatezalo and Radiša Savi_) were reportedly arrested and held for three hours the same day after they took part in an attempt to block traffic.

In Kraljevo, deputy Marko Petrovi_ was reportedly beaten by police during a traffic blockade, and in Jagodina a local opposition official, Dragan Nikoli_, was reportedly arrested.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

For over two months now there have been mass demonstrations in Belgrade and other towns in Serbia in protest at the annulment of local election results in November 1996 which gave control of Belgrade and a number of other major towns to the opposition. *Zajedno* has called on demonstrators to abstain from violence and this call, with few exceptions, has so far been adhered to. In December 1996 a fact-finding mission from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), invited by the government, concluded that *Zajedno* had won local elections in 14 towns, including Belgrade city council. The authorities, however, have continued to refuse to recognize these gains in Belgrade and a number of other towns, by subjecting them to a series of judicial rulings and counter-rulings. Most observers believe that the state's

near-monopoly on the media (outside Belgrade) has largely contributed to the ruling Socialist Party's hold on power and most recently in November 1996, to its victory in federal elections. After the opposition's victory in Kragujevac the state-run Radio-Television Serbia (RTS) claimed control of Kragujevac radio-television station, but a Belgrade court rejected this claim and returned control to Kragujevac city council. RTS has since filed a complaint against this decision.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/faxes/express or airmail letters in English, French, German or Russian or your own language:

- expressing concern at the reported arrests of five opposition officials in Smederevo, and of Dragan Nikoli_ in Jagodina and urging the immediate and unconditional release of anyone who remains in detention for the non-violent exercise of his or her right to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression;
- calling for a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation into the reported ill-treatment by police of Zoran Simonovi_, a federal parliament deputy, of others in Kragujevac and of Marko Petrovi_ in Kraljevo and for any officer found responsible to be brought to justice;
- emphasising that Articles 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (which the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia recognizes as legally binding) guarantee the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly, and urging the authorities to ensure that these rights are upheld.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic of Serbia

Predsednik Republike Srbije

Slobodan Miloševi_

Andri_ev venac 1

11000 Beograd, FR Yugoslavia

Fax: + 381 11 682 167 or 656 862

Telegrams: Predsednik Srbije, Beograd, Yugoslavia

Salutation: Dear President

Minister of Internal Affairs

Zoran Sokolovi_

Ministar unutrašnjih poslova Republike Srbije

Kneza Miloša 101

11000 Beograd, FR Yugoslavia

Fax: +381 11 641 867 or 11 685 937

Telegrams: Ministar unutrasnjih poslova Srbije, Beograd, Yugoslavia

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

NGO Information Centre

Avalska 9,

11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

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and to diplomatic representatives of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 7 March 1997.