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## **Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Kosovo -- Outrageous Execution of ethnic Albanian leaders**

The killing of five prominent ethnic Albanians is an outrageous human rights violation, Amnesty International said today.

“This act supports the numerous allegations of killings and other crimes emerging from the tens of thousands of refugees forcibly expelled from Kosovo over the last three days,” the organization continued.

Ethnic Albanian sources reported this afternoon that Fermi Agani, a high-profile Kosovo Albanian political figure, was executed by Yugoslav security forces yesterday. Four other prominent people, including newspaper editor Baton Hash, were also reported to have been killed along with him.

Fermi Agani, an advisor to Democratic League of Kosovo leader Ibrahim Rugosa, had been a member of the Kosovo Albanian delegation to the Rambouillet peace talks. The reports reinforce fears that the “intellectuals” will be prime targets in a campaign to rid Kosovo of its ethnic Albanian population.

“History seems to be repeating itself,” Amnesty International said. “Killing or imprisoning the prominent members of the community was a widespread practice used by Bosnian Serb forces against Bosniacs between 1992 and 1995, to send a clear message to local inhabitants that they had no future in their own home area.”

Mirroring the horror of the earlier conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, thousands of people have been forcibly expelled from their homes. According to initial reports, police ordered many of these people out at gun point before burning their houses .

Amnesty International is also deeply concerned about statements attributed to the Serbian Justice Minister, Dragoljub Jankovi\_, calling for the reintroduction of the death penalty to speed up prosecution of criminals during the State of War proclaimed on 24 March 1999.

### **Background information**

1. The killing of the five ethnic Albanians The five men reported killed were Fermi Agani, Baton Hash, Alush Gashi, Tehi Dervishi and Dini Mehmeti. They had reportedly been attending the funeral in Priština of lawyer Bajram Kelmendi who was

found shot dead -- together with his two sons, one of whom was a minor -- on Friday after being abducted by police in the night of 24/25 March.

The five men were said to have been taken away by security forces after the funeral and were found dead later. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Kosovo Albanian lawyer Ismet Gashi was also found dead in the southern town of Prizren. In the same town explosives were said to have been used against the offices of another lawyer and of a former political prisoner, although no casualties were reported.

2. **Death penalty and Justice Minister Jankovi\_'s stated position***At the moment only aggravated murder is a capital offence under Serbian law. The most serious crimes, including crimes against international humanitarian law, come under the Federal Criminal Code and Constitution which currently outlaws the death penalty. No executions have been reported in Serbia since 1992 although courts have regularly passed death sentences.*

*As well as advocating the reintroduction of the death penalty, Minister Jankovi\_ is quoted as saying that the Federal Yugoslav parliament and other federal bodies should enact legislation which would "facilitate" criminal proceedings in war-time conditions. Most of these measures appear to be attempts by the state to curb war profiteering.*

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