

UA 31/02

Fear of a**MACEDONIA** Mirjana Najcevska (f)

---

The Macedonian authorities have reportedly threatened to arrest Mirjana Najcevska, the President of the Macedonian Helsinki Committee (a branch of a European federation of human rights organisations), after the Committee published a report criticising the human rights situation in the country. She is now in France, but she intends to return to Macedonia shortly. If she is arrested Amnesty International will consider her a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for her work in defence of human rights.

Earlier this month the Helsinki Committee circulated a draft of its annual report on the state of human rights in Macedonia. During 2001 the Macedonian security forces fought with an ethnic Albanian armed group, the National Liberation Army (NLA), in the northwest of the country. The government accused the NLA of being "terrorists" and infiltrators from the neighbouring Serbian province of Kosovo. A cease-fire was agreed in August, with the help of mediators from the European Union and USA, but the situation in the country remains tense.

During the conflict both sides committed many human rights abuses, which the draft report criticised. The main charge against the Macedonian authorities was ill-treatment of Albanian detainees by the police.

Instead of agreeing to investigate these allegations, government ministers have attacked the Helsinki Committee in Macedonian language newspapers and on television, in a campaign apparently organised by members of the government. The Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior have both attacked Ms Najcevska, on the privately owned *Sitel* television channel, with the Minister of the Interior describing her as "state enemy Number One", "anti-Macedonian" and an "attorney for the Albanians".

On 11 January a leading Macedonian daily newspaper, *Vecer*, claimed that "The Helsinki committee acts as if it has forgotten that it should fight for human rights", and used extracts from the draft report to give the inaccurate impression that it had only condemned human right abuses by the security forces during the 2001 conflict. In fact the report had criticised both sides.

Ms Najcevska's husband, Sasko Todorovski, another member of the Helsinki Committee, was removed from his post as Macedonia's Acting Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg in mid-January. At present he is still in France with Ms Najcevska, but both are planning to return shortly. Journalists have warned Ms Najcevska that she risks being arrested when she returns.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Macedonia was formerly part of Yugoslavia, but gained independence in 1991. Since then the issue of the status and rights of the ethnic Albanian population has been one of the key political issues in the country. According to official figures, they make up 23 percent of the population, with 67 percent being Macedonians and the remainder coming from a number of different races. However, ethnic Albanians claim that their population is larger than this, and that the Macedonian authorities have systematically discriminated against them.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, French, Italian, German or your own language:

- expressing concern at reports that the authorities plan to arrest the President of the Macedonian branch of the Helsinki Committee, Mirijana Najcevska, solely for her work in defence of human rights;
- reminding the authorities that Macedonia is a party to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Article 10 (1) of which states: "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";
- stating that, if she is arrested, Amnesty International will consider Mirijana Najcevska to be a prisoner of conscience.

**APPEALS TO:**President of the Republic

Boris Trajkovski  
Predsedatel na Republika Makedonija  
11 Oktomvri b.b.  
1000 Skopje, Macedonia  
**Fax: + 389 2 222 611/+389 2 112 643**  
**Salutation: Dear President**

Prime Minister

Mr Ljubco Georgievksi  
Predsedatel na Vladata  
Ilindenska b.b.  
1000 Skopje  
Republic of Macedonia  
**Fax: + 389 2 115 285**  
**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

Minister of Internal Affairs

Mr Ljube Boshkovski  
Minister za vnatreshni raboti  
ul. Dimce Mircev bb  
1000 Skopje  
Republic of Macedonia  
**Fax: + 389 2 112 468**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Minister of Justice

Mr Idzet Memeti  
Minister za pravda  
Dimitrie Cupovski 9,  
1000 Skopje  
Republic of Macedonia  
**Fax: + 389 2 226 975**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Dr Slobodan Cašule  
Minister za nadvoreshni raboti  
ul. Dame Gruev br. 6  
1000 Skopje  
Republic of Macedonia  
**Fax: + 389 2 115 790**  
**Email: mailmnr@mnr.gov.mk**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

Minister of Education and Science  
Dr. Nenad Novkovski, Ph.D  
Ministerstvo za Obrazovanje i nauka  
Dimitrie Cupovski 9  
1000 Skopje, Macedonia  
**Fax: + 389 2 118 414**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of Macedonia accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat,  
or your section office, if sending appeals after 13 March 2002.