

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal Concern

25 September 1990

YUGOSLAVIA : Arrests of ethnic Albanian officials:

Jusuf Zejnullahu
Seladin Skeja
Muhamet Bicaaj
Jusuf Karakushi
Isa Mustafa
Lek Vuksani
Agim Malaj
Raif Rambaja
Nazif Matoshi
Ismail Sahiti
Fatos Pula

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It is reported that at least four members of the Assembly of Kosovo province which was dissolved by the Serbian authorities early in July were arrested on 17 September. They are: Raif Rambaja and Nazif Matoshi from Kosovska Kamenica, Ismail Sahiti from Urosevac, and Fatos Pula from Prizren. The Serbian Assembly has revoked their immunity from prosecution.

On 21 September there were further reports of the arrest of former Kosovo government officials: Jusuf Zejnullahu - prime minister; Seladin Skeja - secretary (minister) of transport; Muhamet Bicaaj - secretary of education; Jusuf Karakushi - secretary of internal affairs; Isa Mustafa - member of the government; and Lek Vuksani - secretary of labour and social policy. Also arrested was Agim Malaj, former director of Pristina television.

It appears that they are all charged with having formed a group aiming to change unconstitutionally the borders of Serbia and proclaim Kosovo province a republic, under Article 136 in connection with Article 116 paragraph 2 of the Criminal Code of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Kosovo province, where over 85 per cent of the population are ethnic Albanians, lies in the south of the republic of Serbia, of which it is a constituent part. In 1989 there were wide-spread demonstrations after constitutional changes limited the province's autonomy and gave greater powers to Serbia. Since then over 60 ethnic Albanians have died in violent incidents with security forces brought into Kosovo to quell protest against Serbian policies in the province.

On 2 July ethnic Albanian members of the Kosovo Assembly declared Kosovo an independent unit within the Yugoslav federation. On 5 July Serbia responded by suspending the Kosovo parliament and government and taking over full control of the province. Since then thousands of ethnic Albanians have been dismissed from their jobs and Kosovo's one daily newspaper in Albanian and almost all television broadcasts in Albanian have been banned. Independent trade union officials who declared a strike to protest against these measures have been jailed for up to 60 days. On 7 September ethnic Albanian members of the dissolved Kosovo Assembly met clandestinely and adopted a constitution designating Kosovo a republic within the Yugoslav federation.

Amnesty International is concerned that the above people have been arrested and detained as a result of their non-violent political activity, and considers them to be prisoners of conscience detained in violation of Articles 19 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Yugoslavia in 1971, which guarantees the right to freedom of expression and freedom of association.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/airmail letters:

- urging the immediate and unconditional release of these persons on the grounds that they are prisoners of conscience.

APPEALS TO:**President of the SFRJ Presidency:**

His Excellency Dr Borisav Jovic
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Federal Secretary of Justice:

Dr Vlado Kambovski
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Telegrams SFRJ Justice Secretary, Beograd, Yugoslavia
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President of the Serbian Presidency:

Slobodan Milosevic
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Marsala Tita 14
11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

Serbian Secretary of Justice:

Sreten Vladislavljevic
Republicki sekretar za pravosudje
Nemanjina 26
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COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of Yugoslavia in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 November 1990.