

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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EXTRA 07/94      Fear of "disappearance"

11 February 1994

YUGOSLAVIA (FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF):

Veljko D\_akula

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Amnesty International is concerned at reports of the arrest in Belgrade of Veljko D\_akula, a moderate Serbian politician from the Serbian occupied areas of Croatia (the *Krajina*), on 4 February 1994. Despite requests from lawyers and others who have appealed on his behalf, the police have given no confirmation of his arrest or whereabouts since his arrest. Veljko D\_akula was a prominent critic of the rebel Serb authorities and a proponent of reconciliation with Croatia. Amnesty International is treating the case as a possible "disappearance".

Veljko D\_akula was reportedly arrested in the centre of Belgrade on the morning of 4 February 1994 by four men in plain clothes. Passers-by and a friend with him were prevented from assisting him by plain clothes policemen who showed identification of the State Security Service. He was taken away in a car and has not been seen since. Police in the *Krajina* are reported to have claimed that they were holding Veljko D\_akula in connection with a previous investigation. However, a lawyer acting for him has found no confirmation of this claim.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 1990 and 1991 Serbian nationalist militia in the areas of Croatia with Serbian majorities or large minorities took control of these territories (the *Krajina*) with the aid of the Yugoslavia National Army (JNA). The war between the JNA and Serbian militia and Croatian forces which followed Croatia's declaration of independence in June 1991 was characterized by large-scale human rights abuses. For example, thousands of people, predominantly, Croats, still remain unaccounted for, some were "disappeared". After many failed attempts, a United Nations (UN) sponsored ceasefire came into effect in January 1992. This was followed, in April 1992, by the deployment of UN peacekeeping troops in the areas which largely coincided with those controlled by the rebel Serbs. The agreement by which the ceasefire was introduced and the peacekeeping troops were deployed foresaw the reintegration of the Serb-occupied areas into the Croatian state. Despite negotiations sponsored by the UN and European Union, and recent direct contacts announced between Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, no agreement has been reached for the reintegration of the occupied areas into Croatia.

Veljko D\_akula, formerly a prominent politician in the Serb occupied areas, is in dispute with the current authorities in the *Krajina*. He has supported initiatives for cooperation with the Croatian side and an eventual reconciliation. In September 1993 he, and two other like-minded Serbian politicians, were arrested in the *Krajina* apparently as a result of their opposition to the ruling radical Serb politicians. They were released without charge after several weeks. His "disappearance" in Belgrade may be as a result of an appearance on an independent television station in Belgrade in which he criticised the *Krajina* authorities.

Yugoslav federal law lays down that police detainees must be promptly passed to the responsibility of an investigating magistrate who informs them of their right of access to a defending lawyer. In exceptional circumstances the police can hold a person in custody for up to three days without the decision of an

investigating magistrate.

A journalist working for a liberal magazine was "disappeared" and held in unacknowledged detention for two days after being detained in a Belgrade street in similar circumstances in September 1993.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters either in English/German/French or in your own language:**

- stating that you are aware of reports that Veljko D\_akula was arrested in Belgrade on 4 February 1994 by plain clothes police or state security agents;
- expressing grave concern that he is being held in unacknowledged detention;
- urging that immediate steps be taken to establish his whereabouts and state of health;
- calling for his lawyer and family to be granted immediate access to the detainee;
- calling for his immediate and unconditional release if he is not to be charged with any internationally recognized criminal offence;
- requesting to be informed of the outcome of the investigation into his arrest and detention.

**APPEALS TO:**

1) Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Serbia

Zoran Sokolovi\_  
Ministar unutrašnjih poslova Republike Srbije  
Kneza Miloša 101  
11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

**Telegrams: Minister of Internal Affairs, Zoran Sokolovi\_, Belgrade, Yugoslavia**

**Faxes: +381 11 683 041**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

2) Premier - President of the Serbian Government

Nikola Šainovi\_  
Predsednik Vlade Republike Srbije  
Nemanjina 11  
11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

**Telegrams: Prime Minister, Nikola Šainovi\_, Belgrade, Yugoslavia**

**Faxes: +381 11 682 167**

**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

**COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Justice

Dr Tomislav Ili\_  
Ministar pravde  
Republi\_ko Ministarstvo za pravosudje i opštu upravu  
Nemanjina 26  
11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

**Faxes: +381 11 683 041**

and to diplomatic representatives of the 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 10 March 1994.