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Unheeded warnings at root of Kosovo crisis --Amnesty International writes to the UN Security Council

The chronic neglect of consistent warnings by human rights organizations and the absence of redress for all Kosovo's people has been one of the chief catalysts for the current conflict, Amnesty International said today in a memorandum to the UN Security Council.

"If a lasting peace in Kosovo is to be secured, the long chain of impunity that has been affecting the region must at last be broken," Amnesty International stressed in its memorandum.

In addition to presenting to the Security Council the most recent findings by Amnesty International researchers working in the field, the memorandum includes a series of recommendations to all parties involved, which the organization believes could contribute to averting future conflicts in the region.

"Only by ensuring that all those responsible for human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law are held accountable for their actions in Kosovo -- in the present situation and during the preceding decade -- can we hope to see future conflicts averted and a genuine culture of rights take root in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia," Amnesty International said.

The organization therefore recommends:

- **In relation to access to the region:** The FRY government should grant immediate and unhindered access to Kosovo to all United Nations agencies and to the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Special Rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia should also be given access to enable them to carry out monitoring and reporting of the human rights situation in the province. Only accurate and timely reporting by independent monitors can dispel the rumours and disinformation which flourish during a conflict.
- **In relation to NATO operations in the region:** Any alleged breaches of international humanitarian law committed in the course of NATO operations should be followed by swift, transparent, independent and impartial investigations, and those found responsible should be held fully accountable for their actions. Victims of any such breaches should also receive adequate compensation.
- **In relation to the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY):** The international community should give highest priority to full accountability and the bringing to justice of those responsible for all human rights violations committed

in Kosovo and, to this end, ICTY should be given adequate financial resources and all possible support -- including full access to relevant locations, information, suspects or witnesses.

- **In relation to the refugee problem:** Amnesty International calls for durable solutions and responsibility sharing, insisting that the international community should make every effort to provide the necessary political, financial, material and logistical support to enable any return process to take place.
- **In relation to KLA activities:** The KLA should ensure that all forces under its control abide by basic humanitarian law principles as set out in common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 -- which prohibits the killing, ill-treatment or hostage-taking of civilians and captured or wounded enemy forces.
- **In relation to possible peace-keeping operations:** Any such operation should have clearly defined responsibilities for the sharing of all human rights information, as well as clear channels of reporting to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Security Council.

The organization concludes by insisting that if the international community decides to establish a peace-keeping operation in Kosovo, such an operation should be instructed to monitor compliance with obligations undertaken to uphold and protect international human rights and humanitarian law.

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For further information, copies of the memorandum or to request an interview, please phone Amnesty International's press office on +44 171 413 5566.