

AI INDEX: EUR 70/43/99
23 April 1999

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Amnesty International seeks urgent explanation from NATO on television station attack

Amnesty International has expressed grave concern at the attack in the early hours of 23 April on the headquarters of Serbian state television in Belgrade, during which up to 15 people, all of them apparently civilians, are said to have been killed.

"Based on the information available, we do not see how this attack could be justified. We are seeking an urgent explanation from NATO as to their reasons for carrying out such an attack," said Paul Miller, researcher on the former Yugoslavia, who has just returned from the Macedonia.

"For a site to be considered a legitimate military target, there must be a direct link with the conduct of military operations, and even then the safeguards for protecting civilians must be respected."

People who were in the building reportedly said that they had understood that NATO intended to attack transmitters, not the main television building targeted this morning. Jean Pierre Kelche, French armed forces chief General, is reported to have said at a press conference on 8 April, "We are going to bust their transmitters and their relay stations. We are not aiming at journalists."

International humanitarian law prohibits attacks on civilians and civilian sites. It also requires stringent safeguards when carrying out attacks against military objectives, including giving effective advance warning of attacks which may affect the civilian population.

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For further information or to request an interview, please call Amnesty International's press office on +44 171 413 5566 / 5808. ISDN available.