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## **Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY): Let these men go - Mr Jankovic**

*Amnesty International today called for the release of 14 Kosovo Albanians, held in a Serbian prison without judicial review. The 14 including a 75-year-old man, have reportedly spent 15 months in prison and as yet no criminal investigation has been initiated.*

*These men should be released immediately; their detention is completely unlawful - it violates both national and international law, Amnesty International said.*

*Police orders for their detention in custody for 30 days in May 1999 have long since expired. Even the validity of these orders, issued under emergency legislation in force during the NATO air campaign, were questionable.*

*Amnesty International wrote today to the Serbian Justice Minister, Dragoljub Jankovic, who recently criticized the United Nations Mission in Kosovo for the long periods of pre-trial detention endured by prisoners. Jankovic emphasized that under the Yugoslav Code of Criminal Procedure, no one should be detained for over six months without criminal charges being brought. Amnesty International pointed out to the Minister that his concerns should also apply to the 14 men unlawfully detained in Sremska Mitrovica in Serbia.*

*The 14 men were reportedly detained at various locations in Kosovo in May 1999, along with thousands of others taken in by Serbian police at the time. Their situation was confirmed earlier this month by lawyers working for the Humanitarian Law Centre, a Belgrade-based human rights organization, who visited Sremska Mitrovica prison.*

## *Background information*

*Some 2,000 ethnic Albanian prisoners were transferred from prisons in Kosovo to Serbia when Serbian and Yugoslav forces withdrew in June 1999. About half have been released after serving their sentences or after charges against them were dropped. However some 950 remain in prisons in Serbia, and Amnesty International has serious concerns about these prisoners. At least one, and perhaps many more, are prisoners of conscience. Many were tried in blatantly unfair trials marked by grave breaches of procedure. There have been frequent allegations of ill-treatment in detention. The organization is also concerned that at least 3,000 people of all nationalities in Kosovo are missing since 1998. Many have disappeared or been abducted.*

*In Kosovo a temporary judicial system is being established under the auspices of the UN interim administration. Amnesty International has had concerns about the fairness of trials in these courts and violations of the rights of pre-trial detainees, including the right to be brought to trial promptly. The UN administrator has used his legislative powers to allow pre-trial detention beyond the period of just over six months allowed in the applicable law.*

*The Serbian Justice Minister highlighted the six-month restriction when he called the year-long pre-trial detention of Serb and Roma prisoners in Kosovo illegal. His remarks were reported by the Tanjug news agency on 6 September, following the escape of a group of prisoners in Kosovo.*

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*public document*

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