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## ***Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Proposed lifting of Martial Law should herald full enjoyment of human rights***

*PRISTINA -- Citizens' rights have been severely curtailed by restrictions decreed under the state of war which effectively stifled dissenting voices in the country, Amnesty International said, as the Yugoslav federal parliament prepares to vote tomorrow on the lifting of the state of war.*

*Amnesty International is calling on the Yugoslav Government and deputies to ensure that Yugoslavia's citizens, with the lifting of martial law, gain the full enjoyment of their human rights -- in line with international standards.*

*"People have been detained for expressing dissenting views, for refusing military service on conscientious grounds or simply because of their ethnic origin," the human rights organization said. "These people are prisoners of conscience and should be released immediately."*

*The most recent victims include two Kosovo Serb refugees sentenced to 30 days' imprisonment on 21 June for holding a public gathering, in defiance of martial law, to complain that the authorities had abandoned Kosovo Serbs.*

*Specifically, Amnesty International is calling for an end to restrictions on the rights to freedom of assembly and expression, the rights to liberty and security of person, and a fair and prompt trial.*

*Amnesty International is calling on President Milosevic to release all prisoners of conscience, including ethnic Albanians, Serbs and members of other ethnic communities and to review all cases of people detained on political charges with a view to their possible release. The organization is also calling on*

the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) authorities to make public the whereabouts of all political prisoners.

“Despite the release of several thousand ethnic Albanian prisoners in Kosovo in recent weeks the whereabouts of many of the thousands of Albanians detained in Kosovo for political reasons over the past year, including prisoners of conscience, is still unknown,” Amnesty International said, amid reports that prisons were emptied and many prisoners were transferred to prisons outside Kosovo as the Yugoslav Army withdrew from the province.

Among them is Dr Flora Brovina, a woman physician and President of the Albanian Women’s League who “disappeared” from her home in Pristina on 22 April this year after men in civilian clothes took her away. It was later learned that she had been detained first in Lipijan prison before being admitted to Pristina hospital. She is now said to be held in a prison in Pozarevac in eastern Serbia. Her health is believed to be poor and Amnesty International has called for her to be granted appropriate medical care and for information about any charges against her.

Another prisoner who has been transferred out of Kosovo is 28-year-old Naim Gashi who was among a group of refugees when he was arrested at Sajkovac near Podujevo in May; he is reportedly being held in a prison in Prokuplje. Amnesty International does not know if he has been charged.

The organization is seeking information about the location of other prisoners -- among them Albin Kurti, a former student leader from Pristina who was arrested at the end of April and was also reported to be held in Lipijan. The whereabouts of Ukshin Hoti, a political prisoner who was due for release from Dubrav prison in Istok on 17 May, after serving a five-year sentence, is also unknown to the organisation. Several days after this date the prison was struck by NATO bombs and according to Serbian sources at least 86 inmates died.

Guards at a prison in Pec are reported to have told UN investigators that 436 prisoners were taken away before NATO troops arrived in the town. In Prizren a bus driver said he had taken 94 prisoners from this town to Prokuplje

*in early June; it appears that the transfers had been taking place since 30 April.*

*According to the Serbian Ministry of Justice prisoners had been taken away for their own safety; the Ministry reportedly said that an official would stay in Pristina until 19 June to inform prisoners' families where their relatives were. Amid reports that many files have been burned, Amnesty International fears that it may prove difficult to track down missing prisoners.*

*Amnesty International is also concerned about the fate of nine ethnic Albanians, students in Belgrade, who were reportedly arrested in the first half of May 1999.*

*Prisoners of conscience detained in Serbia include the Serb, Nebojsa Ristic, editor-in-chief of the independent television station Soko in Sokobanja. On 13 April he was sentenced to one year's imprisonment for having displayed a poster protesting against repression of the media in Serbia.*

*Other prisoners of conscience include men who avoided draft or deserted on grounds of conscience; among them are two Nazarenes and seven Jehovah's Witnesses said to be detained in Novi Sad after having been sentenced to up to five years' imprisonment for refusing to bear arms. Many Yugoslav citizens have left the country in order to avoid call-up. They risk long prison sentences on their return.*

*Amnesty International has further called for the review of the cases brought by military prosecutors against the Mayor of Cacak, Velimir Ilic, and against Miodrag Perovic and Nebojsa Redzic, two editors in Montenegro, who are accused of having "revealed military secrets" or "undermined Yugoslavia's military strength" in articles or broadcasts they made, with a view to the possible dropping of charges (they are not in prison).*

*Amnesty International is also concerned about the imprisonment of two Australians and a Yugoslav working for a charity, CARE. On 29 May 1999 they were convicted by a military court on charges of passing on military secrets and*

were sentenced to prison terms of between four and 12 years. The organization believes they were denied a fair trial -- they were tried behind closed doors.

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**\*\*Balkan field press officer, Brendan Paddy, will be in Pristina from Wednesday 23 June through Friday 25 June. He will be available for interviews and briefings regarding our concerns in Kosovo and the region. Brendan can be contacted on: +44 831 640 150 (a landline may be available for broadcast interviews). You can also call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 171 413 5566.**