

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Serbia and Montenegro: Failure to fulfil key human rights commitments**

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Two years after joining the Council of Europe, Serbia and Montenegro (SCG) continues to ignore its obligations to implement key human rights commitments, notably in dealing with the legacy of war crimes and police torture and ill-treatment, Amnesty International said today.

While welcoming steps towards fulfilling some of these commitments, Amnesty International is concerned that the limited progress in many areas, such as full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (Tribunal) in The Hague and investigation into allegations of police torture and ill-treatment has been stalled or even reversed, especially in Serbia, in the last year.

In a report *Serbia and Montenegro: A wasted year. The continuing failure to fulfil key human rights commitments made to the Council of Europe*, Amnesty International lists the commitments that SCG has failed so far to implement and gives numerous examples as illustrations.

"Many of those responsible for the gravest human rights violations during the armed conflicts after the break-up of Yugoslavia continue to enjoy impunity. Despite international and national obligations the authorities of SCG refuse to arrest and transfer people indicted by the Tribunal relying instead on voluntary surrenders and rarely prosecute such crimes domestically. The climate of impunity surrounding these crimes is mirrored by the lack of will by the authorities to investigate allegations of possible unlawful killings, deaths in custody, and police torture and ill-treatment," Amnesty International said.

The Serbian authorities have continued to refuse to transfer to the Tribunal former Serbian Assistant Interior Minister and former Kosovo police chief Sreten Lukic and former Yugoslavia Army chief Nebojsa Pavkovic. Both of them are indicted for crimes against humanity and violations of the laws or customs of war in Kosovo in 1999. Both are openly residing in Serbia. Despite the recent voluntary surrender and transfer to the Tribunal of six people, a number of suspects indicted by the Tribunal are believed to remain at large in SCG.

To date there have been no trials in SCG of senior military or political officials for war crimes or crimes against humanity in connection with the Yugoslav conflicts. Many of those responsible for

abductions and murders of Bosnian Muslims and Kosovo Albanians remain unpunished. The practice to put on trial exclusively low level perpetrators encourages the culture of impunity for the military and political leadership. No-one has yet been charged in connection with the hundreds of Kosovo Albanians buried in secret mass graves on Serbian Ministry of the Interior property. Potential witnesses to the alleged incinerations of Kosovo Albanian bodies in Serbian industrial furnaces in 1999 have allegedly been intimidated by security officials to prevent the facts emerging.

"In order to create the conditions for respect and protection of human rights, the authorities of SCG must bring those responsible for these crimes to justice in proceedings which meet international standards for fair trials. Victims of the crimes must receive adequate reparation. The authorities must take urgent measures to resolve the hundreds of cases of enforced 'disappearances' and abductions and to alleviate the suffering of their relatives," Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International is deeply concerned that the authorities fail to resolve murders that are believed to be political assassinations carried out by state agents, such as those of journalists Slavko Curuvija and Milan Panic. Despite official admission of police torture during "Operation Sabre" in Serbia in 2003, no proceedings are known to have been initiated against those responsible who remain in the police force. In the case of Montenegro, the organization raised again the case of alleged complicity in the cover-up in the trafficking for forced prostitution and severe torture of the Moldovan woman known as S. C.

Amnesty International is also concerned at the continuing discrimination against Roma, especially Kosovo Roma who were displaced as a result of the 1999 conflict, as well as legislation on conscientious objection to military service which continues to be in breach of Council of Europe standards.

Amnesty International calls on Serbia and Montenegro to seriously address past abuses, to promote and protect human rights, and to fulfil its obligations to the Council of Europe.

Amnesty International is also calling on the Council of Europe to use its influence to help SCG fulfil fully its commitments aimed at ensuring respect for and protection of human rights of all persons.

For a copy of the report, *Serbia and Montenegro: A wasted year. The continuing failure to fulfil key human rights commitments made to the Council of Europe* AI Index: EUR 70/005/2005, please see: <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engneur700052005>

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