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## **Macedonia: Time to deliver justice to the victims of war crimes**

Amnesty International is calling on the Macedonian authorities to reverse immediately a parliamentary decision which will have the effect of denying justice, truth and reparation to victims of the 2001 armed conflict in the former Yugoslav Republic.

The parliament of the republic decided on 19 July 2011 to apply the 2002 Amnesty Law to all cases returned to Macedonia for prosecution from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

The decision will terminate the investigation and prosecution of four war crime cases, “NLA leadership”, “Mavrovo Road Workers”, “Lipkovo Water Reserve” and “Neprošteno”, returned to Macedonia for prosecution in 2008.

“The parliament’s decision is clearly inconsistent with international law and will leave the victims and their relatives without access to justice,” said Sian Jones, Amnesty International’s researcher on the Western Balkans.

“Macedonia has to comply with its international obligations. Its authorities must thoroughly and impartially investigate all cases returned from the ICTY and ensure that all those allegedly responsible for violations of international humanitarian law are brought to justice. The survivors and victims must also be provided with full reparation.”

Since 2001 no adequate measures have been taken to investigate the cases of six ethnic Albanians believed to be the victims of enforced disappearances by the Macedonian Ministry of Interior police during the internal armed conflict.

Nor have any effective measures been taken to investigate the abduction of 12 ethnic Macedonians and one Bulgarian national, all of whom are believed to have been abducted by ethnic Albanian armed groups during the armed conflict.

“The relatives of all those who were disappeared or abducted deserve to know the fate of their loved ones”, said Sian Jones.

Amnesty International understands that the parliamentary decision was part of a post-election agreement between the two ruling parties, the nationalist VMRO-DPMNE and the Democratic Union for Integration, Macedonia’s largest ethnic Albanian party.

“The prosecution of violations of international humanitarian law cannot be subject to political interference,” Sian Jones said.

“The parliament appears to have created a climate of impunity for persons suspected of violations of international humanitarian law, including members of the government itself.”

Amnesty International has written to the Macedonian Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski urging him without delay to ensure the prosecution of all cases as required by the ICTY.

Amnesty International understands that the parliamentary decision will be considered by the Constitutional Court.

The organization notes that the Macedonian Constitution provides for respect for human rights in accordance with international law, and that international treaties have primacy over domestic legislation.