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FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA
FEDERAL MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
Office of the Minister

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Belgrade, 4 November 1998

Distinguished Mrs Arbour,

With reference to your letter of 15 October 1998 addressed to Slobodan Milošević, President of the FR Yugoslavia, I would like to present the facts that may help you to clearly understand the situation in Kosovo and Metohija.

The Republic of Serbia was faced with terrorist actions of bandit gangs in a part of Kosovo and Metohija, where several terrorist attacks were carried out against citizens of all nationalities, representatives of the authorities, and law enforcement officers in particular. These gangs committed grave crimes against citizens belonging to all national communities. As a result of a decisive police action, their activities were put under control and their core groups destroyed. Police activities were successfully completed on 29 September when peace set in in the entire territory of Kosovo and Metohija. The citizens who were forced to temporarily leave their homes, due to terrorist attacks, are now returning and economic, social and public life in Kosovo and Metohija is being normalized rapidly.

There was no war in Kosovo and Metohija. Terrorist groups, made up of criminals and religious fanatics have never been organized under a joint command, neither have they controlled the territory, nor respected basic laws of humaneness, nor could have they been considered an army on any grounds. The international community has also clearly defined the actions of these groups as terrorist ones and demanded that the leaders of the Albanian political parties condemn terrorism. We, therefore, accept cooperation with the Tribunal, but do not accept its jurisdiction concerning the events in Kosovo and Metohija, since there was no war there.

Mrs Louise Arbour
Prosecutor
International Criminal Tribunal
THE HAGUE

The competent state bodies are investigating all crimes committed during the terrorist attacks in legal proceedings. All legal actions, envisaged by Chapter XVI of the Federal Criminal Code, will be taken against the perpetrators of crimes committed against humanity and international law. In this context, each individual case, without exception, will be subjected to a detailed investigation. The authorities of Serbia have decided to exempt those who are not directly responsible for organizing or committing the mentioned crimes from criminal prosecution. Maximum transparency of the court proceeding will be provided and the defendants may, in accordance to our legislation, retain lawyers. The International Committee of the Red Cross is guaranteed access to all persons awaiting the trial and, there have been no complaints in this respect, to date.

In order to establish the truth, our country invited international forensic experts to assist our experts in collecting relevant facts and experts from several countries have accepted the invitation. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia guarantees that each case will be investigated in accordance with the international standards.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is fulfilling all its international obligations. In this regard, we express readiness to continue a successful cooperation established by mutual agreements with the International Criminal Tribunal, and to keep in touch with its Office on a regular basis.

Please accept, Mrs Arbour, the assurances of my high consideration.

Zoran Knežević,

FEDERAL MINISTER

The image shows an official seal of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which is circular and contains the text 'FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF YUGOSLAVIA' around the perimeter. Overlaid on the seal is a handwritten signature in black ink.