

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union  
on the trial of 20 ethnic Albanians in Kosovo**

1. The European Union has taken note of the conviction of 20 ethnic Albanians on 30-5-97 in Pristina on charges of terrorism and other activities punishable under the criminal law of the FRY.
2. The European Union condemns acts of terrorism which have been committed in the Kosovo irrespective of who was responsible for these acts.
3. On the other hand the European Union is extremely concerned about reports that the accused have been tortured and about the non-respect of principles of rule of law in the course of the trial.  
In particular, the EU is worried that the defendants were repeatedly denied access to their attorneys while sentences are mainly based on self-incriminatory statements and not on evidence which was sufficiently checked. It is of grave concern that the court refused to follow up statements of defendants that their self-incriminatory confessions had been extracted under duress.
4. The European Union calls upon the government of the FRY to facilitate an independent institution such as the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the former Yugoslavia, Mrs. Rehn, to study the case and to monitor the situation closely, taking into account the criticism raised against court and police.

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5. The European Union reminds the FRY of the crucial importance which it attaches, inter alia, to the respect of human rights and the rule of law as a precondition for the establishment of closer relations with the FRY in accordance with the "Council conclusions on the application of conditionality with a view to developing a coherent EU strategy for relations with the countries of the region" adopted on 29 April 1997.

The Central and Eastern European Countries associated with the Union, and the associated country Cyprus, align themselves with this declaration.

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