

**Motion Passed/Accepted by Annual General Conference  
of Amnesty International Ireland**

**27/28<sup>th</sup> March 2010**

**THE MOTION:** This Annual Conference of Amnesty International Ireland directs the Section's Executive Committee to refer the case of Mr Dragoljub Milanovic, former Director of Radio Television Serbia, to the International Secretariat for investigation and, if it is found that he is an individual at risk or a prisoner of conscience, to initiate a campaign for his release.

Proposed by: June Kelly, County Westmeath

Seconded by: Esta Carter, County Westmeath

---

Background to Case Prepared and Presented to Conference by June Kelly

*The following quote was taken from article: "Bombing Media Workers, Blaming Victims, and the Strange Role of CNN: An Investigation, Ten Years After the Bombing of Radio-Television Serbia" by Tiphaine Dickson – Defense Attorney specializing in international criminal law CounterPunch April 16-30, 2009 Vol. 16, No.8 ...*

“Dragoljub Milanovic, the former director of Radio Television Serbia (RTS), which was bombed by NATO on April 23, 1999, at 2.06am, was convicted on June 21, 2002, of “causing grave danger to public security” by a Belgrade court, for having failed to evacuate his workers. 16 people were killed, and as many were injured when a (NATO) bomb (made in the USA) slammed into the building – news desks, studios, and the makeup room – in downtown Belgrade. Most of the victims were young people – a makeup artist, technicians and production personnel. Judge Dragicevic Dicic of the Belgrade District Court sentenced Mr Milanovic to nine-and-a-half years in prison. (ED)

He was found to have ignored an official order to evacuate personnel, but there are credible accounts that the order produced as evidence was merely an internal draft document bearing neither stamp nor seal, and did not explicitly require the evacuation of RTS employees. It is unclear how Mr Milanovic could have known of its existence, let alone be held to follow it. A witness claimed that the original document had been burned on October 5, 2000, when a mob set fire to RTS (destroying decades of film archives) and nearly beat Mr Milanovic to death. The author of the order (“Order 37”) has not been identified.

Dragoljub Milanovic is to this day the only person to have ever been tried and punished for NATO's bombing. He is currently in custody in Serbia's Pozarevac prison, having served almost seven years of his sentence, where I met him last month, as part of an international delegation – the first one he'd been author-

ized to meet in seven years of detention." *End quote taken from article by Tiphaine Dickson –*

RTS was bombed during the course of NATO's horrific and illegal 78 day bombing campaign against the peoples of the multi ethnic state of Serbia. The NATO air raids began on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1999 –

In the first 30 days of attacks on Serbia NATO destroyed 25 bridges, 16 major railway stations, 6 major roads, 7 airports, tens of thousands of factories, offices, residential buildings, 55 major industrial complexes, 18 oil refineries and dumps, 5 major agricultural complexes, 300 HA of forests, 21 hospitals, over 200 schools and colleges, 8 power plants, 23 TV and radio transmitters, 18 medieval monasteries ..... 2 million people left without heating ... 500,000 left jobless and 2 million left without any income. NATO's use of depleted uranium ammunition has caused ongoing illness and death to the people of Serbia. \*

During March and April 1999, RTS's dedicated workers willingly risked danger to transmit to the world words and images about the NATO bombardment that was targeting the Serbian infrastructure and slaughtering civilians. \*\*

Despite the existence or not of directives or Orders, RTS staff chose to remain at their posts in order to broadcast vital life-saving instructions to the people – For example: Meteorological bulletins providing wind direction in relation to deadly toxic smoke – fallout from the bombing of chemical and other industrial plants and oil storage facilities. To broadcast the whereabouts of mobile medical units – Civil Defense public notices etc – RTS was in short providing a vital public service to the residents of Belgrade and neighbouring cities under NATO attack.

NATO bombs and rockets destroyed 10 private radio and television stations and 50 TV transmitters and relay stations during the 78 days of air raids.

It is important to note that during the 1980's and 1990's there were some 23 privately-owned independent television stations and many privately-owned independent radio stations in Serbia. Political opposition parties, opposition newspapers, opposition TV and radio stations were all allowed under the Government of Mr Milosevic.

On March 25<sup>th</sup> 2009, Human Rights campaigners from Europe and North America, including representatives of the U.S. based International Action Center, gathered for a conference in Pozarevac, Serbia, where Mr Milanovic is imprisoned, to organize a campaign to free him. Earlier in the day, Defense Attorney Tiphaine Dickson, author Peter Handke, former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark and Vladimir Krsljanin of the People's Movement of Serbia visited Mr Milanovic in prison.

Renowned Serbian journalist Liljana Milanovic spoke at the conference, noting that RTS was “deliberately bombed” according to the NATO commander in Europe at the time, General Wesley Clark.

I attended this meeting and was informed personally by survivors of the NATO attack on RTS that staff were perfectly free to leave/evacuate the RTS building at any time during the crisis and that there were no restrictions and that they voluntarily continued with their duties.

British Prime Minister at the time Tony Blair admitted that NATO bombed RTS after it showed the carnage from the bombing of the passenger train on the bridge in the Grdelicka Gauge where 75 civilians were killed.

Thus NATO’s primary goal in attacking the broadcasting facility was not to disable the Serbian military command and control system, as NATO statements later claimed, but an attempt to stifle the truth. This makes the assault a war crime, as Amnesty International charged in 2000 and repeated in April 2009. To quote Amnesty – “NATO deliberately attacked a civilian object, killing 16 civilians, for the purpose of disrupting Serbian television broadcasts in the middle of the night for approximately 3 hours. It is hard to see how this can be consistent with the rule of proportionality”.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the NATO bombing, Amnesty International issued the following statement – “The bombing of the headquarters of Serbian state radio and television was a deliberate attack on a civilian object and as such constitutes a war crime”. Amnesty’s Balkans expert, Sian Jones, pointed out that victims’ families had never obtained redress for the consequences of this war crime, and that “ten years on, no public investigation has ever been conducted by NATO or its member states into these incidents”.

On April 23<sup>rd</sup> NATO again rejected the Amnesty charge, claiming that the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia – itself a NATO creation – had absolved NATO of war crimes in the past.

I would ask the Conference to please consider an investigation in to the case of Dragolub Milanovic.

Thank you.

*\* NATO violated its own founding Charter, the Helsinki Final act of the OSCE and the Charter of the United Nations in launching its bombardments of Serbia. The sovereignty and territorial integrity guaranteed by the UN Charter was ignored and blatantly bombed one of the UN’s founding member states, one of the victorious powers in World War II.*

*\*\* Two plane loads of Cruise missiles passed through Ireland in June 1999 during the NATO bombing of Serbia. These were the same type of missiles that were used in the attack by NATO in 1999 on the TV station in Belgrade, and on the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade. ( Dr. Edward Horgan, International Secretary, Irish Peace and Neutrality Alliance).*