

PUBLIC

AI Index: EUR 65/008/2004

02 February 2004

Further Information on UA 16/04 (EUR 65/001/2004, 13 January 2004) Prisoner of Conscience

**FORMER YUGOSLAV
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

Zoran Vraniskovski (m), religious leader

On 30 January, Zoran Vraniskovski also known as Bishop or Metropolitan Jovan was released from custody. He had been arrested on 11 January along with four monks and seven nuns after holding a religious service in his private apartment. All were released after about 30 hours, but Zoran Vraniskovski was re-arrested on 12 January and charged with "causing national, racial or religious hatred, discord and intolerance" under Article 319 of the Criminal Code.

Amnesty International believes Zoran Vraniskovski was arrested because of his support for the ecclesiastical control of the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC) by the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC). This was proposed in May 2002 and publicly accepted by Zoran Vraniskovski on 29 June 2002.

In July 2002, however, Zoran Vraniskovski was stripped of his title of Bishop by the MOC and denounced as a "traitor". He was also banned from conducting any religious activities in churches in Macedonia. Many Macedonians see his stance as challenging Macedonian nationhood, and his actions provoked a storm of controversy.

Many thanks to all those who sent appeals. If possible, please send a final round of appeals, in English or your own language:

- welcoming the release of Zoran Vraniskovski;
- calling for the charges against him to be dropped.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Justice

Ixhet Memeti
Minister za Pravda
Dimitrie Chupovski 9,
1000 Skopje, Macedonia

Telegram: Minister of Justice, Ixhet Memeti, Skopje, Macedonia

Fax: +389 23 226 975 (if someone answers, state in English, that you wish to send a fax and they will connect the machine)

Salutation: Dear Minister of Justice

COPIES TO:

Head of the Human Rights Unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Biljana Stefanovska-Sekovska
Dame Gruev 6
1000 Skopje, Macedonia

Telegram: Head of Human Rights Unit, Biljana Stefanovska-Sekovska, Skopje, Macedonia

Fax: +389 23 115 790

E-mail: stefanovska@mfa.gov.mk

Salutation: Dear Madam

and to diplomatic representatives of Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 March 2004.