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international**

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**URGENT
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YUGOSLAVIA: Melika SALIHBEGOVIĆ
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Amnesty International is concerned about Melika Salihbegović, a 42-year-old poetess, whom it believes to be a prisoner of conscience. She began a hunger-strike on 15 September 1987; it is not known whether she is continuing with this.

Melika Salihbegović is a former prisoner of conscience. She was tried in 1983 together with 12 other Muslims and sentenced to five years' imprisonment under Article 133 of the Yugoslav Criminal Code ("hostile propaganda"). She had been accused, *inter alia* of criticizing the position of Muslims in Yugoslavia, attacking the leadership of Yugoslavia's Islamic community and helping a co-defendant prepare the foreword to the Islamic Declaration, a manuscript which formed the centrepiece of the prosecution's case during the trial. (For more information see the Amnesty International report Yugoslavia - Prisoners of Conscience, published in May 1985.)

Her sentence was later reduced on appeal to three and a half years and in October 1985 she was granted conditional release after a 76-day hunger strike had caused her health to deteriorate.

On 21 September 1987 Melika Salihbegović was reportedly arrested after maintaining a hunger strike since 15 September in front of her house. On 21 September she had informed friends by telephone of her intention of continuing the hunger strike in front of the Parliament of Bosnia-Herzegovina (the republic of Yugoslavia in which she lives). Melika Salihbegović had undertaken the hunger strike to demand the return of her passport, the right to employment and the right to publish her writings.

Amnesty International notes that many former prisoners of conscience in Yugoslavia have experienced difficulties in obtaining a passport or finding employment after their release from prison. Bans have also been placed on the publication of writing by former prisoners of conscience.

On 25 September 1987 Tanjug, the official Yugoslav press agency, stated that Sarajevo Municipal Court had sentenced Melika Salihbegović to 55 days' imprisonment for "wounding the patriotic and national feeling of citizens" and that she had been immediately sent to Foča prison to serve her sentence.

Amnesty International believes that Melika Salihbegović has been tried and imprisoned for making use, non-violently, of her right to freedom of expression and therefore considers her to be a prisoner of conscience.

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Amnesty International is an independent worldwide movement working for the international protection of human rights. It seeks the *release* of men and women detained anywhere because of their beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin, language or religious creed, provided they have not used or advocated violence. These are termed *prisoners of conscience*. It works for *fair and prompt trials* for all *political prisoners* and works on behalf of such people detained without charge or trial. It opposes the *death penalty* and *torture* or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of *all prisoners*.

