

UNMIK PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

UNMIK/PR/365

21 September 2000

UNMIK Office for Missing and Detained: SRSG

PRISTINA---SRSG Bernard Kouchner announced in Gjakova/ Dakovica yesterday that soon an office dealing specifically with issue of the missing persons and the detained would be opened in the Government Building. This would be a contact office where people could directly approach the administration on this issue.

Dr. Kouchner was in Dakovica/Gjakova as part of his "Outreach Initiative", where he met a large number of people whose relatives had either gone missing during the conflict last year or were detained in prisons in Serbia. In a public meeting held in the town's cultural centre, he told the people that very soon the Special Envoy on Persons Deprived of Liberty, Mr. Henrik Amneus, would arrive in Kosovo. Mr. Amneus has been appointed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Dr. Kouchner said the Special Envoy was waiting to get a visa from Belgrade to start his work. "His appointment demonstrates the intention of the international community to seek a solution to this problem which is poisoning the whole process of inter-ethnic reconciliation in Kosovo", he said. He said US Senator Bob Dole, who has been dealing with the issue of Americans missing in Vietnam for the last 30 years, had promised to send a leading expert on the subject to Kosovo. The Council of Europe will also be sending experts here to provide counselling to the families whose members had either gone missing or were being held in the Serbian prisons.

He also promised to travel to Brussels with a Kosovar delegation comprising members of families of the missing and the detained to raise the issue with the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Commission.

He told the audience that they had an important role to play in helping the international community achieve the common goal, to bring democracy in Kosovo, because of the sacrifices made by their loved one in the Kosovo struggle. "And before we move towards self-governance, we have to have fair, open and democratic elections", he added.

Dr. Kouchner had a separate meeting with political and community representatives of the municipality, inaugurated a monument in the memory of Mother Teresa and the international fair of Gjakova/ Dakovica. The fair will run till 25 September.

He also attended a poetry reading from a book by the French poet Jacques Prevert, organised by the Writers Society of Gjakova. The book has also been translated into Albanian.