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**UN Human Rights Council  
Thirty-eighth session, 18 June – 6 July 2018**

**Item 6:  
Consideration of UPR reports**

**SERBIA**

Mr. President,

Amnesty International is concerned that impunity persists in Serbia for crimes under international law, and the number of indictments raised by the Office of the War Crimes Prosecutor and prosecutions concluded at the Special War Crimes Chamber at Belgrade District Court remains seriously low.

We welcome Serbia's acceptance of recommendations to strengthen the fight against impunity, including by cooperating fully with the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals and implementing the National Strategy for the Prosecution of War Crimes.<sup>1</sup> However, we are concerned that, despite the long-delayed appointment of the War Crimes Prosecutor in May 2017, there has been no notable progress in issuing new indictments and there is still a significant backlog of pending cases. We call on Serbia to step up the prosecution of war crimes cases, including those involving senior level military and police officials, to put in place measures to enhance the protection and support of witnesses in war crimes trials, and to adopt legislation to adequately recognise and provide full reparation to individuals who have suffered harm as a result of crimes under international law, including the relatives of victims of enforced disappearance and victims of wartime sexual violence.

Mr. President,

We are deeply concerned about the shrinking space for human rights defenders. Organizations in Serbia continue to report relentless intimidation and physical and verbal attacks against human rights defenders, including misogynistic and discriminatory smear

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<sup>1</sup> A/HRC/38/14, recommendations 114.39-114.42 (Netherlands, Croatia, Sweden, Switzerland), 114.44-114.46 (USA, Belgium, Costa Rica).

campaigns against women human rights defenders. NGOs working on transitional or post-conflict justice are particularly vulnerable to such threats.

Journalists also experience harassment, intimidation and physical assaults, yet prompt investigations and final convictions are rare.<sup>2</sup> Political television talk shows have been closed, editors dismissed,<sup>3</sup> and websites of independent media hacked. The freedom of independent media remains severely curtailed.

We welcome Serbia's support of a more than 20 recommendations to guarantee freedom of expression and freedom of the press, to ensure protection of journalists and human rights defenders, and to thoroughly investigate all threats and attacks against them.<sup>4</sup> We call on Serbia to implement these recommendations without delay.

Thank you, Mr. President,

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<sup>2</sup> European Commission, Serbia Country Report, April 2018.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Srđan Škoro, chief editor of the Belgrade daily *Večernje Novosti* (a third owned by the state), was dismissed in early 2014, reportedly for his criticism of the SNS.

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/38/14, recommendations 114.47 (Cote d'Ivoire), 114.56 (Italy), 114.58-59 (Netherlands, Norway), 114.61-114.64 (Republic of Korea, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, 114.66-114.71 (Brazil, Slovakia, Australia, Germany, UK, Greece), 114.73-114.81 (Czechia, Estonia, Canada, France, Switzerland, USA, Austria, New Zealand, Republic of Korea).