

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**EU DECLARATION ON THE RECENT EVENTS IN SERBIA**

The European Union is deeply concerned at the latest developments in Serbia and strongly condemns the take-over of Belgrade's independent TV station Studio B on Wednesday, 17 May and the simultaneous actions against Radio B292, Radio Index, the daily BLIC as well as TV Mladenovac.

This action, following continuing mass arrests and detention of opposition representatives and student leaders, heavy punishment of independent media, repression of journalists and obstacles to public rallies of the democratic forces, is the latest in a series of repressive actions by the Milosevic regime.

The Council expressed its concern over reports regarding further measures to be taken by the regime against the democratic opposition and civil society.

The increasing policy of repression by the regime is leading FRY and Serbia into a position of greater distance from free and democratic Europe, increasing the isolation of the country and running against the wishes of the Serbian people.

Almost ten years after the dismantling of the SFR of Yugoslavia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia remains the only one among the South East European states which still stands isolated from the mainstream of Europe. President Milosevic's regime alone is responsible for that situation.

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The EU has deployed great efforts to help the transition process of countries of the Western Balkans to democracy and a market economy, through substantial economic support, technical assistance, the offer of contractual relations and the development of enhanced political dialogue.

The EU, together with the countries of the region, is also working in the framework of the Stability Pact to bring those countries closer to the prospect of integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures. Much has already been achieved. The EU is looking forward to welcoming the FRY in this framework of cooperation after a successful democratic change in Serbia has been achieved.

The EU's policy is not directed against the Serbian people, but against President Milosevic's regime which is violating basic human rights in the most flagrant manner. The EU has no quarrel with the Serbian people. This is why the EU is providing substantial humanitarian assistance, developing a comprehensive dialogue with civil society and taking measures to support democracy and the independent media in Serbia.

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