

Serbia: Djindjic Tries to Cut Hague Deal

Author: [Zeljko Cvijanovic](#)

Zoran Djindjic is attempting to persuade The Hague to abandon moves to indict his loyal police chief

Serbian prime minister Zoran Djindjic is trying to save his loyal police chief, Sreten Lukic, after The Hague announced it was investigating his role in crimes committed in Kosovo.

Anxious to re-exert his shaky control over Serbian police forces, Djindjic is trying to persuade the tribunal not to indict Lukic, widely seen as his right-hand man.

According to IWPR sources inside the Serbian government, the premier is holding negotiations with The Hague, offering to deliver some already indicted Milosevic allies by the end of this year - on condition that the tribunal doesn't indict Lukic. It is still uncertain whether this deal will work.

The Serbian government has been under heavy Western pressure to fully cooperate with the tribunal for months.

But Djindjic must now carry out a delicate balancing act between meeting the demands of the West and preserving the loyalty of the Serbian police forces, whose cooperation is needed to make the necessary arrests.

Maintaining police loyalty is not an easy task, especially after events of the last month. A rebellion of the elite red berets and a magazine report listing officers suspected by the tribunal of crimes committed in Kosovo both dramatically weakened his control over the police force.

The latest blow came on November 28, when Hague deputy chief prosecutor Graham Blewitt said that Lukic, appointed chief of public security by Djindjic in January 2001, was also under investigation.

Lukic and the Yugoslav army chief-of-staff Nebojsa Pavkovic were mentioned in the tribunal's final submission in the trial of Slobodan Milosevic for crimes against Kosovo Albanians in 1998-99. Pavkovic and Lukic "may be, but do not necessarily have to be indicted, which depends on the results of the investigation", said Blewitt.

"The Hague wants to back Milosevic's indictment with someone from the police, and they believe that Lukic is the ideal solution," said a Serbian government source.

"But the government is very determined to defend Lukic and make some kind of a deal with the tribunal. That would strongly protect its authority with the police, who it needs to help it cooperate with The Hague."

Djindjic believes that if he offers up others named in Milosevic's Kosovo indictment, issued in May 1999, a deal may be struck that leaves Lukic free.

These could include Milosevic's political and military advisors Vlatko Stojiljkovic, Nikola Sainovic, General

Dragoljub Ojdanic and Milan Milutinovic, the present Serbian president. These people could be extradited by the end of the year, as a sign of Belgrade's willingness to cooperate with The Hague.

By saving Lukic, Djindjic could not only restore, but strengthen his authority over the police.

The Serbian government's shaky hold on power was highlighted last month when elite Serbian police forces, the Red Berets, protested in Belgrade for several days.

The soldiers were demonstrating over the inclusion of the names of unit members on a list forwarded to the Serbian government by The Hague tribunal of soldiers alleged to have committed war crimes in Kosovo, Bosnia and Croatia. With a lot of difficulty, Djindjic managed to rein in the protest.

Only a few days later, the Belgrade weekly Reporter published a list of 362 names of policemen, claiming that it was forwarded to the Serbian government by the tribunal.

A note next to 17 names of mainly incumbent top-rank Serbian police officers said they were being investigated in connection with possible crimes. The other 345 names were described as either suspects or witnesses to crimes.

A Serbian government official told IWPR that the list is authentic and that Carla del Ponte had presented it to Djindjic at the beginning of September, during her visit to Belgrade.

In public, however, both the Serbian government and the tribunal claimed the list was forged and aimed at hindering cooperation between Belgrade and The Hague.

Some believe Djindjic still has sufficient space to manoeuvre to satisfy the growing pressure of the international community and ease relations with his police force. They say he could buy time by delivering old Molosevic supporters to The Hague before being forced to extradite his allies.

Zeljko Cvijanovic works for the Belgrade daily Blic and is a regular IWPR contributor.

Location: [Serbia](#)
[Kosovo](#)
[Croatia](#)
[Bosnia and](#)
[Herzegovina](#)

Source URL: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/serbia-djindjic-tries-cut-hague-deal>