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Bosnia and Herzegovina: Time for a full investigation into the enforced disappearance of Avdo Palic

More than twelve years after the enforced disappearance of Avdo Palic, Amnesty International expresses its continuing concern about the lack of progress in the investigation by the Republika Srpska (RS) authorities into this crime.

In January 2006, the RS formed a commission tasked with conducting an investigation into the enforced disappearance of Avdo Palic (Palic Commission). Its report, presented in April 2006, appeared initially to contain important information on the fate of Avdo Palic, including on the whereabouts of his mortal remains. However, it did not lead to any significant progress in the location and exhumation of the body and in the criminal investigation into the enforced disappearance.

In December 2006 the Palic Commission was reactivated and, reportedly, the Office of the RS Prime Minister committed to provide the necessary assistance for it to finally complete its investigation and provide information on the fate and whereabouts of Avdo Palic. However, eight months down the line, such investigation has had no concrete results.

Amnesty International urges the RS authorities to ensure that the activities of the Palic Commission result in a full investigation into the circumstances of this crime and in the exhumation of the mortal remains of the victim. The RS should demand complete cooperation on the part of the authorities of Serbia, which should disclose all the relevant information in their possession on the possible role of former RS Army officers currently in Serbia who are suspected of involvement in or who may possess information on the enforced disappearance of Avdo Palic.

Moreover, Amnesty International urges the RS authorities to ensure that, once the work of the Palic Commission is concluded, the findings are forwarded to the competent Prosecutor and that a criminal investigation into the enforced disappearance is conducted, with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice.

Background

Former Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Armija Bosne i Hercegovine) Colonel Avdo Palic disappeared in July 1995, when he was reportedly forcibly taken away by soldiers of the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS - Vojska Republike Srpske) from the UN Protection Forces compound in Žepa. He had gone there to negotiate the evacuation of civilians from the town which had surrendered to the VRS. His fate and whereabouts have remained unknown ever since.

In 2001, the Human Rights Chamber for Bosnia and Herzegovina ordered the RS authorities to carry out a full investigation into the fate of Colonel Avdo Palic from the date of his enforced disappearance. However, no progress was made in the investigation. The Palic Commission was

formed after, in January 2006, the BiH Human Rights Commission found that the RS authorities had “failed to provide adequate details to establish the facts of the ‘disappearance’ of Colonel Avdo Palic after the fall of Žepa”.