

UA 365/94

Ill-treatment / Fear of ill-treatment

4 October 1994

CROATIA

Zoran Pusić
Kazimir Miculinić
Mrs Miculinić (mother of Kazimir)
Vesna Bernadić
and others

On 27 September 1994, in what is emerging as a pattern of police violence against people being evicted from flats formerly owned by the Yugoslav National Army (YNA), those listed above were reportedly kicked and punched by police after they refused to obey police orders to leave a flat in Zagreb. Amnesty International fears that others will be ill-treated in future evictions, more of which are expected in Zagreb on 3 and 7 October. In addition, a speaker for the Croatian Ministry of Defence has reportedly announced that there will be a further 3,000 evictions.

Over the past two years Amnesty International has received reports from Croatia of police having beaten or otherwise ill-treated people while evicting them from flats formerly owned by the YNA. There has been increasingly sharp confrontation between the authorities and human rights activists who claim that these evictions are illegal.

The incident on 27 September involved some 60 people, including human rights activists (Zoran Pusić is president of the Citizens' Committee for Human Rights and Vesna Bernadić is vice-president of "Home", an association for the protection of those threatened with eviction), members of opposition parties, journalists, friends and neighbours. They had gathered in the flat with the aim of preventing, non-violently, the forcible eviction of the family living there. The family reportedly consisted of a single mother, who had worked as a nurse in a military hospital for 15 years, and her two children.

It is reported that several of those beaten by police suffered injuries; Zoran Pusić suffered injuries to his neck; Kazimir Miculinić had two ribs broken, while his mother suffered a fracture to one of the vertebrae in her neck. Vesna Bernadić and others were severely bruised. In addition, 10 or 11 protesters, the majority of whom are human rights activists, were briefly detained at a police station. The police have since released an official statement that summary proceedings have been started against Zoran Pusić, Kazimir Miculinić, Vjekoslav Magaš and Vesna Bernadić on charges of insulting officials in the performance of their duties, and against seven other protesters for refusing to leave the flat.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Prior to Croatia's independence and the war in Croatia, the YNA reportedly owned around 38,000 flats in Croatia. After the departure of the YNA, many residents of these flats remained, including pensioners, medical staff who worked in military hospitals and other employees of the YNA. Under the present laws, they retain their rights as leaseholders. However, the Croatian Government announced in 1991 that these flats henceforward belonged to the Republic of Croatia and were at the disposal of the Ministry of Defence. Since 1992 the government has been evicting leaseholders on the pretext that the flats are needed for Croatian

military, war invalids and widows, while claiming that their tenants are traitors and Serbian extremists. (In fact, leaseholders who have been evicted have reportedly included people who are not Serbs.)

According to "Antiwar Campaign Croatia", a local peace and human rights organization, human rights activists have attempted, with some success, to resist evictions non-violently, by ensuring that many people are present when police come to carry out evictions and that there are witnesses to any violence used by police. Recently Vesna Bernadić and another woman human rights activist went on a 10-day hunger-strike in protest after a woman who was eight months pregnant and her family were evicted from a flat.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams, faxes and airmail letters in English, German, Italian or French or in your own language:

- noting that over the past two years Amnesty International has received a number of allegations that police have beaten or otherwise ill-treated people while evicting them from flats formerly owned by the Yugoslav National Army;
- expressing concern about the most recently reported incident on 27 September 1994 in which police in Zagreb beat and injured the above persons and others while carrying out the eviction of a family from a flat;
- urging the authorities to institute an impartial and independent investigation into these reports and to make public its findings;
- urging that any police officer found to be responsible for having beaten or otherwise ill-treated these people be brought to justice;
- urging that police be required to respect international standards for law enforcement, in particular the United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials.

APPEALS TO

(Prime Minister)

Mr Nikica
 Predsjednik vlade Republike Hrvatske
 Trg Stjepana Radića 7
 41000 Zagreb, Croatia
Faxes: +385 41 277 082
Telegrams: Prime Minister Valentić, Zagreb, Croatia
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

(Minister of Internal Affairs)

Mr Ivan Jarnjak
 Ministar
 Ministarstvo za unutrašnje poslove Republike Hrvatske
 Savska cesta 39
 41000 Zagreb, Croatia
Faxes: +385 41 443 715 or +385 41 443 277
Telegrams: Minister Jarnjak, Internal Affairs, Zagreb, Croatia
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

(Minister of Foreign Affairs)

Dr Mate Granić
 Ministar
 Ministarstvo vanjskih poslova Republike Hrvatske

Visoka 22
41000 Zagreb, Croatia

Antiwar Campaign Croatia
Tkalciceva 38
41000 Zagreb, Croatia

and to diplomatic representatives of Croatia accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 November 1994.