

5 October 1995

Further information on UA 220/95 (EUR 64/05/95, 15 September) - Fear of ill-treatment / Fear of extrajudicial execution

CROATIA Serbs in areas retaken by Croatian Forces

Amnesty International is still gravely concerned for the safety of Serbs remaining in the Krajina, as reports continue of extrajudicial executions, ill-treatment and acts of intimidation perpetrated against them by Croatian forces. This concern is further heightened by the poor security conditions in the area.

An Amnesty International delegation which recently visited the area around the town of Knin found the small and largely elderly Serbian population living in an situation of fear and great insecurity. In most villages, substantial numbers of houses have been burnt by soldiers or rendered uninhabitable. In some cases the residents are living among rotting animal carcasses and even human corpses. The residents reported a continuing presence of soldiers or armed civilians and very infrequent patrols by civilian police, a situation also apparent to the Amnesty International delegation. The absence of telephones and private or public transport means that they are dependent on the United Nations (UN) presence in the area to report incidents.

The most serious recent incident occurred on 28 September when nine or more ethnic Serbs, aged between 66 and 84, were killed by three or four men in military uniforms in the village of Varivode. UN personnel who went to investigate reportedly found eight houses in the village spattered with blood and a 15-metre trail of blood near another house. Blood stains were found on the wall of another house with fragments of human hair and skin. The names of nine people from the village have been found on recent graves in the Knin cemetery, 25 kilometres from the town.

Among incidents reported to the Amnesty International delegation was one of an 82-year-old woman from the Mokro Polje area near Knin. On 18 September, four men wearing green military uniforms came into her house. One soldier pushed the barrel of his rifle against her lips and shouted to her to open her mouth. After she pushed the barrel away a second held a knife to her throat and demanded money. Meanwhile the other two men searched her house looking for things to steal, but found nothing they wanted to take. On or around the same day another woman of the same age reported that she was made to strip naked at knife-point in her home by a single camouflage-uniformed soldier who demanded money.

In the hamlet of Stolifi near Knin an 84-year-old, partially deaf and blind man told Amnesty International that on 12 September two armed Croatian soldiers came to his house and asked whether he had any weapons. As they left they threw hand grenades into the house while he was inside. One exploded in the kitchen, causing him light injuries, another in the hall, and a third in the bathroom.

These reports of intimidation and killings come on top of many others reported to UN personnel, Amnesty International and other local and international organizations visiting the area. Bodies of people with indications that they were unlawfully killed, such as bullet wounds to the

head or knife wounds to the throat, continue to be discovered in ones and twos. It is difficult to establish when some of these killings occurred. Many appear to have occurred during the initial military action in early August, but others, such as the incident in Varivode have occurred more recently.

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

- expressing concern about the continued reports that members of the Croatian armed forces may have committed extrajudicial executions, citing the examples of the killings in Varivode;
- expressing further concern about the continued harassment and ill-treatment of ethnic Serbs by members of the Croatian Armed forces, citing the examples of the man in Stolifi and the woman in Mokro Polje;
- calling on the authorities to issue strict orders to soldiers and police to refrain from acts of intimidation against civilians;
- calling for urgent steps to improve the security situation for the remaining Serbian population in the former UN Protected Areas Sectors North and South, by drastically increasing the civilian police presence, and by ensuring that all individuals are given effective and visible protection;
- calling for thorough, impartial and independent investigations to be carried out into any allegations of human rights violations which have been perpetrated and for those suspected of perpetrating such violations to be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

(Minister of Internal Affairs)

Mr Ivan Jarnjak
 Ministar
 Ministarstvo za unutrašnje poslove Republike Hrvatske
 Savska cesta 39
 10000 Zagreb
 Croatia
Telegrams: Ministar za unutrašnje poslove, Zagreb, Croatia
Faxes: +385 1 443 715
Salutation: Dear Minister

(Minister of Defence)

Mr Gojko Sušak
 Ministarstvo za narodnu obranu Republike Hrvatske
 Trg Kralja Krešimira IV 1
 10000 Zagreb
 Croatia
Telegrams: Ministar za narodnu obranu, Zagreb, Croatia
Faxes: +385 1 432 415; +385 1 4550 236
Salutation: Dear Minister

(Deputy-Premier - Deputy President of the Croatian Government, responsible for Human Rights Issues)

Dr Ivica Kostović
 Zamjenik Predsjednika vlade Republike Hrvatske
 Trg Stjepana Radića 7
 10000 Zagreb
 Croatia
Telegrams: Zamjenik Predsjednika, Zagreb, Croatia

Faxes: +385 1 4550 284

Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES 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 20 November 1995.