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Bosnian Serbs' decision to cooperate with Tribunal -- a major step forward

Reports that Bosnian Serb authorities had released case-files relating to alleged crimes committed against Bosnian Serbs to the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague is a significant move in the cooperation of the Bosnian Serb authorities with the Tribunal, Amnesty International said today.

According to media reports, the files handed over to International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia contained 1,200 pages of documents and video and audio cassettes relating to 440 individuals suspected of having committed war crimes against Serbs between 1992-1995.

"This move is a major step forward in the relationship between the Bosnian Serb entity -- the *Republika Srpska* -- and the Tribunal, following years during which the *Republika Srpska* has refused to cooperate," Amnesty International said.

"We now encourage the Bosnian Serb authorities to cooperate further with the Tribunal by ensuring that all those Bosnian Serbs publicly indicted and remaining in the republic should be arrested and transferred to the custody of the Tribunal."

Until recently *Republika Srpska* had refused to establish a relationship with the Tribunal, accusing the court of focusing on Bosnian Serb suspects and ignoring Muslim and Bosnian Croat suspects. Amnesty International has for many years encouraged the Bosnian Serb entity to cooperate with the Tribunal, through, for example, the transfer of information relating to crimes against Bosnian Serbs.

Background

In recent months statements from Bosnian Serb Prime Minister Milorad Dodik have hinted at a possible change. In November 1999 Prime Minister Dodik called for the wartime Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić... to hand himself over to the Tribunal, accusing of him of "*disturbing democratisation and international perspectives*" in the *Republika Srpska*. Prime Minister Dodik has also stated that all those who "*killed people because of their different nationalities should be brought to justice*".

The news came in the same week as French SFOR troops arrested the former speaker of the Bosnian Serb parliament and past joint-president of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Momcilo Krajišnik, who will make his first appearance before the Tribunal on Friday.

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 171 413 5566 or visit our website at <http://www.amnesty.org>