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ABUSES CONTINUE¹ IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA: SERBIA, MONTENEGRO AND BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA

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¹ This update is part of Helsinki Watch's continuing coverage of war crimes in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and of human rights abuses in other parts of the former Yugoslavia. Given the violent nature of these conflicts, it is often difficult to take direct testimonies from victims at the time of the abuse. For this reason, the testimonies we are publishing in this update are not necessarily in chronological order.

ABUSES IN YUGOSLAVIA

Freedom of Association and Abuse in Detention in Belgrade

Police harassment of organizations representing ethnic and political minorities has intensified over recent months. Helsinki Watch has received reports of members of such groups being arrested by the police on the pretext that they are unpatriotic or are collecting funds to support enemy forces. Police target individuals based on their organizational affiliation after the individuals make public statements and/or engage in activities on behalf of their organizations. These cases are in violation of the right to freedom of association and freedom of speech and in many cases also involve abuse in detention. Helsinki Watch will examine these abuses in depth in a forthcoming newsletter on civil liberties in Yugoslavia. Two specific cases are described below.

T.P., a Muslim man from Belgrade, reported that police in Belgrade arrested him and his colleague for attempting to document and locate members of the Islamic Community Committee.²

The Islamic Community Committee decided to make lists of all the committee members. I was assigned to accompany a member of the committee during his visit to [a Belgrade suburb] on Sunday, April 11. We were supposed to make lists of all members there and note their average income so that the poorest members would in the future be excused from paying Zakat.³

We arrived in [the suburb] at about 1:30 p.m. My colleague recognized one woman who was selling something on the street, so we stopped to write down her name. We already had some 20 or 30 names listed.

At that moment, a police patrol came by [with two police officers].⁴ They asked what we were doing and took away our notebook. When they saw that the notebook belonged to the Islamic Community Committee, they took our documents and said they would take us to see their boss.

They took us to the [local] police station. The commander of the station was born in [near my home town]. He asked me why we were collecting money for weapons. He also threatened to send me to the front to fight.

After the witness and his colleague were in the custody, plain-clothes inspectors and the arresting officers abused and harassed them. The witness continued:

The car [from the police station] arrived. One of the policemen punched me in the stomach. My colleague and I were forced into the car, with the driver and the two policemen who arrested us. They hit us on the head with truncheons. They said that we should all be slaughtered and threatened to kill us. They wanted to know what other family members I had and where my brothers were.

² Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative, on the basis of anonymity, in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, on April 15, 1993. All identifying details have been removed to conceal the identity of the witness.

³ Zakat is a tax, levied at approximately 40 percent of all personal income, collected for the poor as prescribed in the Koran.

⁴ The witness identified one of the officers by name. Helsinki Watch retains the name of the officer in its confidential files.

When we arrived [the arresting officer] stood outside with the truncheon ready to hit me over the head. As I jumped out, trying to avoid him, he hit me in the back. He started screaming and accused me of attempting to flee. All three of them hit us as we walked from the car to the entrance of the police station – with truncheons on the legs and fists on the kidneys.

The witness and his associate did not fare any better inside the police station. There, police continued to beat them over the course of their interrogation.

They took us to see the commander of the police station, who told us: "I will send you to Zvornik to fight! Didn't you get everything you needed from Serbia?" We were made to stand with our backs against the wall and they hit us with fists and rubber truncheons. One of them grabbed my throat and said: "Look at this nice throat. It is just right for slaughter!"

The officers poked my colleague with a knife in the stomach. Not a lot. They just wanted to intimidate him. They took our names and our addresses. They made us listen to some Serbian songs, and made us cross ourselves the Orthodox way.

All this time I was saying that this money was for the mosque, not for weapons, and that they should call the Imam, and have him explain. They insulted our faith. The police chief [who was interrogating us] took a baseball bat out of the closet and said that he would beat me with it if he saw us again.

They took our personal belongings away – the Islamic Community Committee's notebook, our documents, our shoelaces, as if we were going to jail. They took us to a hallway that had doors to two adjoining cells. We were instructed to sit down and not talk while a young policeman of about 22 or 23 years of age watched us.

We were again questioned by two plain-clothes inspectors. They wanted to know who I was and what I was doing at the moment of the arrest, what was the money for, where my brothers were. They also asked if I had been beaten. I said that I was, which was obvious since I could not walk.

Before we left, they warned us that they would pick us up again if we told anyone about this. They did not return the official notebook to my colleague, instead they gave him a receipt. One of them walked with us to the entrance so that we would not be hit again. We were released at about 5 p.m. on the same day.

In another case involving freedom of association, police in Belgrade arrested Z.R.,⁵ a 36-year-old gay man, once purportedly for "listening to Ustaša⁶ music" and a second time for "spreading false information." After police

⁵ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Belgrade on May 15, 1993.

⁶ With the backing of the Nazi and Italian fascist governments, Croatian fascists (known as Ustašas) established the puppet state of the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska - NDH). Under the Ustaša regime, thousands of Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and others were killed between 1941 and 1945. Some Muslims were members of the NDH government and Muslim forces fought on the side of the Ustaša regime during World War II. Serbian military and paramilitary forces commonly refer to Croat and Muslim forces in the current war as "Ustašas." Both Croats and Muslims reject the label and vehemently deny that they are Ustaša sympathizers or fascists. Some Serbs also refer to Muslims as "Turks," associating Muslims with the Ottoman rulers who reigned over most of Serbia from 1371 to 1878.

took Z.R. into police custody the first time, they lost interest in his purported crime. Instead, they questioned him extensively about a gay and lesbian organization, Arkadia, of which he was an organizer. The officers beat him when he refused to give the police names of other members.

On February 21, as I was getting ready to leave the house, two plain-clothes policemen rang my doorbell. They were so huge they were barely able to get through the door. They had a warrant, signed by inspector Jović, to arrest me for "listening to Ustaša music." (I really do listen to a few Croatian pop singers and groups.)

They allowed me one phone call and I called L.M. [a colleague from Arkadia]. They drove me to the police station on the 29th of November Street. Inspector Jović and the two policemen who arrested me were most interested in the list of members of Arkadia, which I refused to give them. Besides, this list doesn't exist since our organization is very informal.

Since I insisted that the list didn't exist, they started hitting me. All three of them beat me, but not continuously. They were kicking me in the legs,⁷ and with fists on the body. This lasted for about one hour. I asked them for an official note saying that I was arrested, but I got more beatings instead.

Police arrested Z.R. again, less than one month after his first "offense." This time, the warrant charged him with "spreading false information," since his account of his first arrest had been carried by an independent television program. At the police station, however, no one asked him about any "false information." Instead, police again questioned him about the membership of Arkadia.

On March 10, at about 8:30 a.m., two other policemen came to my door with a warrant to arrest me for "spreading false information." This is because L.M. told G.S. [a journalist] about my case, and she reported it on the Studio B television news.

I was taken to the same police station, to a different inspector, who asked the same question: "Where is the list of members of Arkadia?" He said that we were an illegal organization. I was not beaten this time, and soon released.

Although Arkadia was formed in December 1990, and is a member of IGLYA (International Gay and Lesbian Youth Association) and of IGLA (International Gay and Lesbian Association), we were not able to register in Yugoslavia. This is because we don't have offices, and no permanent address. We will try to register at my home address.

As of this writing, Z.R. planned to register Arkadia under his home address. Helsinki Watch will continue to monitor developments in this area and will report its findings on this subject.

Forced Displacement of Non-Serbs in Serbian Provinces

In previous reports, Helsinki Watch has devoted much of its attention to "ethnic cleansing"⁸ in Bosnia-

⁷ Z.R. displayed several fresh scars on his legs.

⁸ The term "ethnic cleansing" in this context refers to the various tactics used by ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia to

Hercegovina. At the same time, however, the forced displacement of non-Serbs has also occurred in Serbian provinces, albeit on a smaller scale than in Bosnia. Helsinki Watch representatives have compiled the following testimony of such abuses in Serbian provinces, focusing on the two areas from which many of the complaints were made: Vojvodina and Sandžak. This topic will be expanded upon in Helsinki Watch's forthcoming report on civil liberties in Yugoslavia.

Vojvodina

Serbian paramilitaries, with the apparent blessing of local, provincial and republican governments, have been terrorizing and forcibly displacing non-Serbs from areas within Serbia.⁹ This campaign has been particularly intense in the province of Vojvodina, where Serbian paramilitary forces have expelled Croats, Hungarians, Slovaks and others from the following villages: Hrtkovci, Šid, Indjija, Beška, Petrovaradin, Slankamen, Novi Sad, Plavna, Golubinci and Kukujevc.

For the most part, Serbs who are permanent residents of these villages do not support the expulsion of their non-Serbian neighbors. Rather, it is the Serbian refugees from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina who are joining the efforts of Serbian paramilitary groups and political extremists to coerce the non-Serbs to leave. Serbian refugees from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are quick to occupy the homes abandoned by those fleeing for more hospitable territory. Local police and civilian authorities in some of these towns appear to condone and, in some cases, even encourage the expulsion of non-Serbs from Vojvodina. And Serbian and Yugoslav authorities in Belgrade have done little to prevent or bring to an end such practices.

The displacement of non-Serbs and the resettlement of Serbs in these areas is part of an attempt to change the ethnic structure, names and local government of multi-ethnic areas in Vojvodina. According to interviews with some members of the independent press, this "ethnic cleansing" has been concentrated in an area of Vojvodina bordering Croatia. Reportedly these efforts have decreased significantly in recent months, largely because few non-Serbs remain behind in the targeted areas.¹⁰

The Serbian Parliament and the Serbian Ministry of the Interior has been put on notice of the violence against non-Serbs in Hrtkovci. In particular, anti-war and human rights activists in Belgrade filed charges concerning the issue in late May 1992. In addition, some Serbian political parties in Vojvodina continue to pressure the Serbian government to prevent the displacement of non-Serbs from Vojvodina. Nevertheless, to date the Serbian government has done little, if anything, to arrest paramilitaries terrorizing non-Serbs in Vojvodina and has not taken steps to prevent further displacements. Officials at the Interior Ministry told anti-war and human rights activists that they should "worry about Krajina"¹¹ and that they would only accept such a complaint if it was filed by a lawyer who had been appointed by the residents of Hrtkovci, or by some other village directly affected by the allegations.

displace members of other ethnic groups. Such tactics include mortar attacks, verbal and physical harassment, rape, hostage-taking, etc.

⁹ Julijana Mojsilovic, "Croats Flee Serbia Rather Than Live in Terror," The Associated Press, February 4, 1992.

¹⁰ Based on an interview by Helsinki Watch with representatives of an independent journalist association in Vojvodina, in New York on June 29, 1993.

¹¹ In August 1990, in the predominantly Serbian town of Knin (population 15,000), Serbs held a referendum to proclaim a Serbian autonomous region within Croatia. After Serbian forces assumed control of areas in Croatia where Serbs comprised a majority or a significant minority, they declared their secession from Croatia and proclaimed the formation of the "Republic of Serbian Krajina."

Some Serbs affiliated with Serbia's anti-war and human rights movement, the independent press and some opposition parties have undertaken steps to protect non-Serbs from persecution and displacement in Vojvodina. They have alerted the foreign press to such displacements of non-Serbs and have intervened with the local and republican authorities on behalf of those being persecuted. Moreover, some Serbs from Vojvodina support their non-Serbian neighbors and have worked to prevent their displacement. Serbs who defend non-Serbs in their republic do so at great personal risk of harassment, physical assault and, possibly, death.

Hrtkovci

The fate of the village of Hrtkovci in Vojvodina illustrates methods used to displace non-Serbs forcibly from Serbia. In May 1992, Serbian paramilitary groups and their followers assumed control of the local government of this village. The new government nearly immediately changed the name of the village and streets to reflect its new Serbian identity, and the demographics of the town immediately shifted in turn. In early May 1992, Hrtkovci's population of 4,000 was approximately 80 percent Croatian; two months later it was approximately 75 percent Serbian.¹² According to N.K., "2,014 Catholics (Hungarians and Croats) lived in 520 houses in the village. As of the end of March 1993, 218 families had left and only 848 Catholics, mostly the elderly, remained in another 300 houses."¹³

The campaign against non-Serbs in Hrtkovci was at least inspired by Vojislav Šešelj's¹⁴ visit to the village in early April 1992.¹⁵ During that visit, Šešelj helped established a local branch of the Serbian Radical Party, an ultra-right-wing political party which he leads. At a meeting of the new party, Šešelj reportedly stated that "all Croats who had sinned had to leave." The newly appointed secretary of Šešelj's party, Mr. Zilić, then read the names of those Croats who had to leave the village and announced "cadre" changes in the town's public enterprises. He demanded that several prominent non-Serbs in the community be dismissed from their positions as directors of local firms or from the local government. After persistent harassment over several weeks, many residents fled the village out of fear.

Those who stayed endured continuing verbal and physical harassment and other forms of intimidation. Uniformed and armed men (some with stockings over their heads) entered the homes of some non-Serbs and threatened them at gunpoint or with knives demanding that they pack their belongings, either within days or hours, and leave the village. Some were also forced to sign over their homes and belongings to local authorities. In addition, several people were beaten, including the local Roman Catholic priest and one man, Milan Stefanac, was found bludgeoned to death in a ditch.¹⁶

¹² Chuck Sudetic, "Serbs Force an Exodus From Plain," *The New York Times*, July 26, 1992. According to the 1981 census, Vojvodina's total population numbered approximately two million; 54.4 percent were Serbian; 18.9 percent Hungarian; 8.2 percent Yugoslav; 5.4 percent Croats; and 3.4 percent Slovaks. Approximately 20 other ethnic groups also lived in Vojvodina in 1981.

¹³ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative on March 25, 1993, in Hrtkovci, a village in Vojvodina, Yugoslavia.

¹⁴ Vojislav Šešelj reportedly heads the Serbian paramilitary group the White Eagles (*Beli Orlovi*). He heads the ultranationalist Serbian Radical Party which was second in the December 1992 elections and won 34 seats in the federal assembly and 73 in the Serbian National Assembly. [Milan Andrejevich, "The Radicalization of Serbian Politics," RFE/RL *Research Report* Vol. 2, No. 13, March 26, 1993.]

¹⁵ The information in this section is drawn from interviews conducted by Helsinki Watch representatives with refugees from Hrtkovci, Vojvodina, in Zagreb, Croatia, on June 18, 1992, and with residents in the village in late July 1992.

¹⁶ Chuck Sudetic, "Serbs Force an Exodus From Plain," *The New York Times*, July 26, 1992. See also Florence Hartmann, "Mass

According to M.K., a 27-year-old Croatian man interviewed by Helsinki Watch representatives:¹⁷

Armed gangs would enter our homes with guns and knives and threaten us, demanding that we leave Serbia. We call the police station and the local police come to see what happens. They can often defuse the situation but claim that they cannot prevent Serbs from taking over houses belonging to non-Serbs who have fled or are about to flee.

Šešelj again promoted intolerance against non-Serbs at a rally in the village when he read a list of families that were not "loyal citizens of Serbia," and should therefore be expelled from Hrtkovci. He claimed that the named individuals or families were "sympathizers" of the Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica – HDZ) and Democratic Union of Hungarians in Vojvodina (Demokratska Zajednica Vojvodzanskih Madjara – DZVM). Šešelj's supporters began spreading the rumor that they, masquerading as activists from Croatia, collected 300,000 German marks in contributions for the Croatian National Guard (Zborna Narodne Garde – ZNG)¹⁸ from the local Croats and Hungarians.

M.K. told Helsinki Watch that during this trip Šešelj also

warned that children of "mixed marriages," i.e., those with Serbian and Croatian parents, were "illegitimate" and that those children have to be "eliminated." He also said that all the Croats had to go to Croatia and all the Serbs had to come to Serbia. Since his visit, that appears to be the aim of the local extremists who have taken over the village. Most of our Serbian neighbors defended us and now they are being harassed and threatened. They have no choice but to remain quiet now.

Over the weeks that followed, Šešelj's sympathizers threw grenades at non-Serbian homes and harassed their occupants with threatening phone calls. Groups of armed men, refugees from Western Slavonia and northern Bosnia, began breaking into the homes of Croats, Muslims, Hungarians and other minority groups. At times, they forced the owners to sign documents that stated that they were voluntarily exchanging their property for the homes that Serbs had abandoned in Podravska Slatina, Daruvar, Bosanski Brod, or some other Croatian or Bosnian town.

Terrified into fleeing from their homes, hundreds of people left for Croatia, bringing whatever personal belongings they could put in a car. Often, they discovered that the houses they had "exchanged" for theirs had been destroyed in fighting or had already been occupied by other refugees. Other non-Serbs, seeing what was happening, legally swapped homes with Serbs fleeing Croatia under similar, yet to Helsinki Watch's knowledge, not quite as drastic pressure. The militant newcomers occupied all public buildings in Hrtkovci and replaced the local government with one that not only condoned what was happening, but promoted and aided it.

The new government did this by holding a session of the town council that was also attended by a few locals who approved of its methods. They "elected" Ostoja Sibinčić, a cashiered Yugoslav Army officer, as the new mayor, in effect overthrowing the legal government. At another session, they changed the name of Hrtkovci to Srboslavci.

Expulsions from Vojvodina," *Le Monde*, June 16, 1992.

¹⁷ Interviewed in Zagreb, Croatia, on June 18, 1992.

¹⁸ The Croatian National Guard (ZNG) was the precursor of the current Croatian Army (Hrvatska Vojska – HV). The ZNG was the Croatian armed force that fought against Serbian forces in Croatia during the early stages of the war in Croatia.

When Helsinki Watch representatives first visited Hrtkovci in July 1992, 350 families had already left. The remaining non-Serbs, supported by local and other Serbs who believed that equal rights should be granted to all citizens of the republic, appealed to the Serbian and federal governments for assistance.

In August 1992, the government of former Yugoslav Prime Minister Milan Panić responded to the situation. In particular, it has been credited with:

- ousting Deputy Federal Interior Minister Mihalj Kertes amid allegations that he was personally responsible for overseeing "ethnic cleansing" in this part of Serbia;
- arresting Ostoja Sibinčić and his deputy, Rade Čakmak, and charging them with incitement to violence;
- setting up police checkpoints at the entrances to the village and removing signs for "Srboslavci," and
- evicting refugees who illegally occupied homes and returning the properties to their rightful owners.

Life seemingly returned to normal until Panić lost the December 1992 election for the Serbian Presidency against the incumbent Serbian President Slobodan Milošević. Nearly immediately, local officials released Sibinčić and Čakmak pending trial in December 1993. Harassment of non-Serbs began anew.

In early March 1993, the windows of Sibinčić's house were broken and, a few days later, his car was blown up by unidentified assailants. Residents interviewed by Helsinki Watch speculated that these attacks were staged at Sibinčić's orders to justify a resumption of "ethnic cleansing."

A Helsinki Watch representative visited Hrtkovci again on March 25, 1993, and found that pressures had increased on non-Serbs and the local Serbs who defend them, as well as on some of the refugees from Croatia and Bosnia who refused to return to their former Yugoslav republics to fight with Serbian forces. In many of the cases described to Helsinki Watch during this trip, people had been physically abused, or threatened with physical and verbal abuse, by local authorities or by unknown civilian assailants for the purpose of intimidating them or their family members.

Moreover, by this time, there was open hostility toward Helsinki Watch. For example, as soon the Helsinki Watch representative's identity was known, Mayor Sibinčić declared:

Helsinki Watch has done enough harm already and you are not welcome here! I do not advise you to stay in the village any longer. I will inform the police that you are here and have you arrested!¹⁹

With that, Sibinčić threatened to arrest the Helsinki Watch representative and proceeded to escort her out of town.

Before her departure, however, the Helsinki Watch representative learned that the house of N.K. had been broken into and looted.²⁰ Apparently, the perpetrators told him that he would be killed if he spoke of the looting to

¹⁹ Interview with a Helsinki Watch representative on March 25, 1993, in Hrtkovci, Vojvodina, Yugoslavia.

²⁰ N.K. would not speak to Helsinki Watch regarding this matter, except to say that his story was accurately represented in the *Borba* article and that his house was still visibly damaged because of the looting. Helsinki Watch visited N.K. in Hrtkovci on March 25, 1993, and observed the damage inflicted upon his house.

anyone. Still, Helsinki Watch learned that he endorsed an interview he had given to a journalist for *Borba*, an independent Belgrade paper. The interview is quoted below:

I had to leave my apartment on May 12 last year. As I was issuing documents to one woman, six men entered. They were cursing my "Ustaša God," the Pope, the Cardinal, and saying "Ustaša, move away from here." I was frightened, but offered them coffee. They refused, saying that by next week I had to "clean out Hrtkovci of all Hungarians and Croats."

I said I had no right to do such a thing since I am not in a position of authority. I live with these people and survive with their help. One of them took out a strange pointed knife. He grabbed my hair, pulled my head back, and pressed the knife against my throat. He said he would show me how the Ustašas in Croatia are slaughtering the Serbs. He said he would gouge my eyes out, put salt on them and make me eat them.

[Another time] a few men came over. I saw that they were coming from the front. They asked for food. [He gave them some.] When they were finished, one of them said: "Priest, now we will kill you, since we each got 50 German marks to do that." I begged them not to. They beat me up. My jaws do not fit together the way they used to. I have two, though not very deep, cuts on my back.²¹

Five people sympathetic to Sibinčić, the former mayor of Hrtkovci, beat the son of N.S., a Serbian woman married to a Hungarian.²²

My 22-year-old son was beaten up on May 15 by five people. He was badly bruised, his jaw and cheekbone fractured, and he is suffering from amnesia. I know that these were Sibinčić's people since they had been threatening him for a while. Sibinčić himself threatened my younger son. When I returned [home from work], I called Sibinčić and told him I would kill him if he touched my family again.

[Sibinčić's] car was blown up a few days later. Although he accused his opponents, I am convinced that this was not done by the villagers: we are all much too afraid.

Police launched a village-wide search for suspects. N.S. stated that police searched her for evidence that could allow them to make an arrest:

On Sunday at 6:30 a.m., three uniformed policemen and two plain-clothes police inspectors from [the nearby town of] Ruma came to my house with a search warrant. I let them in, saying that they can kill me with whatever [weapon] they found in my house. After this they decided not to search my house, and instead politely asked me to get into their car, and took me to the police station in Ruma. They kept me there for three to four hours, saying that police inspectors from Novi Sad were coming over to interrogate me.

They took me to another room where there was a psychologist waiting. They asked if I would allow

²¹ N.K.'s interview, reported to Jovo Paripović, *Borba*, Belgrade, March 13, 1993.

²² Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative on March 25, 1993, in Hrtkovci, Yugoslavia. The witness spent two months on the front lines in Bosnia treating wounded Serbian soldiers.

myself to be attached to a lie detector, and I consented. The psychologist, who was shocked by what was going on, then asked me questions to which I had to answer either yes or no, such as: "Did you threaten Mr. Sibinčić?" "Did you blow up his car?" "Do you know who did?", etc.

A.E., a 40-year-old Serbian man who has his own small business, had also openly opposed Sibinčić's methods. He gave a similar account of the investigation into the car bomb:²³

On the same day that [Sibinčić's] car was blown up, at about 10 p.m., three inspectors brought me to the police station in Ruma for questioning. They were asking me where I had been over the past few days, and at the moment of the explosion. This lasted for about three hours.

On Sunday, March 21, Inspector Aleksić and another four or five policemen came for me again. They searched my house without a warrant. This was the second time my house was searched. The first time was on September 18, 1992, when a group of refugees reported that I was threatening them with a machine gun. During the search, the police found my hunting rifle and a handgun, both of which I had licenses for, and took them. The refugees originally pressed charges against me for threatening them with a machine gun, but since this was never found during the search, they changed the charges, and said that I had threatened them with a handgun.

This time, however, they did not find anything. But they took me to Ruma anyway, along with three other villagers.²⁴ We were kept there until noon and were all attached to a lie detector. A psychologist from Novi Sad questioned me and asked me about the explosion. I was released after that and when I asked them for an official note about the interrogation, they said that it wasn't necessary.

The government doesn't do anything when hand grenades are thrown at other people's homes, only if something happens to Sibinčić. This is a form of government pressure on those who are opposed to human rights violations against non-Serbs. I am afraid this will lead to bloodshed in the village, since this incident seems to have been staged by him to justify the further harassment of his enemies.

In some instances, harassment took the form of destruction of property. A Helsinki Watch representative observed damages inflicted upon the property of J.M., a 45-year-old housewife, married to a Hungarian. J.M.'s house had been damaged by a hand grenade and the front wall of her yard had been torn down. She reported these incidents to a Helsinki Watch representative:²⁵

On January 27 this year, at about 6:30 p.m., several people started knocking down the front wall of my yard. I did not see them, nor do I know what tools they were using, since we were hiding in the back of the house. On the next night someone was banging at the blinds of my windows.

My son was beaten up on February 19 on his way home from school by four refugee boys. The police

²³ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative on March 25, 1993, in Hrtkovci, Yugoslavia.

²⁴ A.E. named the other villagers; Helsinki Watch retains their names in a secure area outside its offices.

²⁵ Interviewed by Helsinki Watch representatives in Hrtkovci, Yugoslavia, on March 25, 1993.

only said, "This must never happen again."

On March 7, a hand grenade was thrown into my yard. It made a hole in the ground and pierced the glass on the front door.

Other residents of Hrtkovci reported being dismissed from their jobs because of their ethnicity. F.S., a Hungarian man trained as an engineer, told Helsinki Watch:²⁶

I was the technical director of a local factory until I was sent on forced leave because I was a "technological excess."²⁷ I was fired and two refugees were hired with the same job description as mine. My son had been fired earlier, because two family members cannot work in the same factory.

Tension in the village was promoted by public displays of intolerance. Typical of this trend were signs on the local soccer field, proclaiming such slogans as: "Forbidden to the Ustašas," and "Soccer Club Četnik."²⁸ In sum then, to the extent that non-Serbs remain in Hrtkovci, they continue to be the target of harassment and intimidation. Helsinki Watch fears that the policy of intimidation and forced displacement, which extends beyond Bosnia-Herzegovina, is part of a systematic policy to rid all Serbian-controlled areas of non-Serbs, or at least to diminish their numbers significantly.²⁹

The Sandžak Region

Helsinki Watch has received numerous reports of beatings and other physical abuse of Slavic Muslims in Sandžak, a predominantly Slavic Muslim region which straddles southwestern Serbia and north-eastern Montenegro. Tensions in this impoverished and economically underdeveloped area were apparently sparked by the referendum Sandžak Muslims held on increased political and cultural autonomy in October 1991.³⁰

²⁶ Interviewed by Helsinki Watch representatives in Hrtkovci, Yugoslavia, on March 25, 1993.

²⁷ This phrase is often used in the former Yugoslavia to describe a person whose services the company temporarily does not need because production has been reduced due to economic problems and United Nations sanctions.

²⁸ Observed by a Helsinki Watch representative in March 1993.

²⁹ In the summer of 1992, the CSCE authorized missions to Kosovo, Vojvodina, the Sandžak and Macedonia, with the hope of at least containing the wars in the Balkans. Peter Prahar, an American diplomat stationed in the Sandžak area, was skeptical about whether diplomats alone could contain the war:

Nobody explained exactly how we were supposed to do this. . . . They gave us the keys to a four-wheel-drive, a pat on the back and told us to come down here and keep the peace. . . . [James Rupert, "Diplomats on Lonely Mission to Ease Tension in Yugoslav Regions," *Washington Post*, June 9, 1993.]

³⁰ Milan Andrejevich, "The Sandžak: The Next Balkan Theater of War?" RFE/RL *Research Report* Vol. 1, No. 47, November 27, 1992, pp. 26-34. The Serbian government has argued that Muslim efforts at independence violate the Helsinki accords because of the issue of the inviolability of borders. *Id.*

A Helsinki Watch representative visited Novi Pazar, the main city in the Sandžak region, in late June 1992.³¹ During the visit, turret guns of Yugoslav army tanks were pointed at the city center. The tanks' presence did not appear to serve a military purpose nor was their heavy presence evident in other civilian areas in Serbia or along the Serbian and Bosnian border. Rather, the position and high visibility of military hardware and personnel in Sandžak appeared aimed at intimidating the local and refugee Muslim population.

Bosnian refugees who were fleeing to Macedonia, Turkey, Slovenia or Croatia via Sandžak³² have claimed that Yugoslav army personnel would frequently harass and sometimes beat Muslims in Sandžak, demanding that they leave Serbia. Some of the Bosnian refugees to whom Helsinki Watch spoke said that they had been forcibly displaced from eastern Bosnia and had fled to Sandžak, hoping to settle among Muslims in Serbia. Many then fled from there as well, claiming they felt "unsafe" in Sandžak and that they were frequently subjected to threats and general mistreatment by military personnel stationed in the area. In the Sandžak region in the republic of Serbia, Muslims and Albanians have been forced to flee for less overt reasons.

As early as the autumn of 1992, Helsinki Watch received reports that Serbian irregulars from Montenegro were allowed to move between Montenegro and the Sandžak area, with at least tacit cooperation from Montenegrin authorities. Their presence has served to intimidate the local Muslim residents.³³ Although a U.N. delegation to the area in mid-1992 did not see overt signs of Serbian military abuse of the civilian population, a Helsinki Watch representative observed that the presence of tanks outside the city aimed inward "appeared aimed at intimidating the local and refugee Muslim population."³⁴ Indeed, as many as 69,000 out of a population of 400,000 Muslims have fled the Sandžak area because of "provocations."³⁵

Kalafati

Kalafati is a village about 5 kilometers outside of Priboj in the Sandžak area. It consists of about 200 families; 120 are Muslim houses and 3 are Serbian. Since the war broke out in Bosnia, over 50 families have moved away. Helsinki Watch interviewed a few of the remaining villagers in May 1993, none of whom were willing to be identified. They all reported that they were shot at when they worked in the fields, and that the shots came from the direction of Pribojska Banja, a Serbian-held village on the opposite bank of the Lim River.³⁶

³¹ Helsinki Watch representatives have since revisited the Sandžak region. Reports from subsequent visits will be included in future Helsinki Watch reports.

³² Muslims displaced from eastern Bosnia who wanted to travel to Croatia would do so first by travelling to Macedonia and then by travelling through Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary before arriving in Slovenia or Croatia. Many such refugees claimed they feared persecution in Serbia proper and sought to circumvent Serbian-populated areas of the republic. Such refugees were interviewed by Helsinki Watch representatives in Ljubljana and Zagreb in June 1992.

³³ Patrick Moore, "Is 'Ethnic Cleansing' Spreading to the Sandžak and Vojvodina?" Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty *Daily Report*, September 18, 1992.

³⁴ *War Crimes in Bosnia-Herzegovina* Volume I, Helsinki Watch, August 1992, p. 88.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ The two villages are located on opposite hillsides. In order to reach Kalafati from the main road, one has to drive across the dam of the Potpeć hydro-electric station.

Armed Yugoslav Army reservists are often seen wandering through the village. Recently, three soldiers came to the school in the middle of the village and entered the classroom. They were armed and, according to the parents, they terrified the children.

The villagers are also very concerned about the two Yugoslav Army anti-aircraft guns located on the "Serbian side" of the river, beneath Pribojska Banja and directly opposite Kalafati. The authorities claim that this is for the protection of the dam, but the Muslims of Kalafati feel that they are positioned to intimidate them.

A 59-year-old villager from Kalafati, employed as a night-guard at a construction site, reported that he had been shot at by JNA reservists and was later forced to go on vacation.³⁷

On March 1, 1993, I was coming home from work in the morning. I saw five or six armed reservists on the dam. One of them had a knife in his hand. They offered me some kind of brandy (*rakija*); they had been drinking. As I continued walking across the dam, they started shooting after me. They didn't come after me, but remained on the dam. I told people in the village about this incident and someone informed our local councilman, who filed a complaint with the police.

The next day, several reservists questioned me at work. They wanted to know who reported this to the police, if it wasn't me. I think that the reservists were from Pribojska Banja. That was the last time they harassed me.

There are three of us Muslim guards at the construction site. Someone took the firing pins out of our guns so that we could not shoot. I didn't discover this until recently. Now I am on forced vacation.³⁸

A 24-year-old man from Kalafati described early forms of discrimination against Muslims. First, he claimed, they were "not allowed to fish in the river."³⁹ In addition, shopkeepers have refused to sell them goods, and army reservists have harassed them:

There is a local store, Poljopromet, across the dam where we always buy flour. For three months now, there have been problems every time the flour arrived. Armed reservists push us around, saying that not a single sack of flour will cross to our side.

[The reason there is such a dispute over flour is that the black market price is 120 German marks for a 100 kilogram sack, and the shop price is much lower, so they can make a lot of money selling this flour at a higher rate.

The incident occurred on February 10, 1993. Thirty Muslims and Yugoslav army reservists unloaded the truck carrying flour. The reservists loaded half of the cargo onto a tractor, leaving an insufficient amount for the Muslims. The Muslims surrounded the tractor, which was driven by Zika Savić. The reservists leveled their weapons at the Muslims and told them: "Go to Bosnia. Alija will feed you." They pushed the Muslims around

³⁷ Interviewed by Helsinki Watch representatives in May 1993 in Kalafati, Serbia.

³⁸ Although workers forced on vacation may receive some pay, it is frequently 25-50% less than their normal salary.

³⁹ Interviewed by Helsinki Watch representatives in Kalafati, Serbia in May 1993.

and fired their weapons into the air. The Muslims refused to disperse, and Savić started up the tractor and ran over someone's foot.

Other Muslims from Kalafati have provided Helsinki Watch with testimony attesting to additional incidences of harassment and intimidation. Generally, the targets of harassment who had any material wealth and access to transportation eventually fled the village.

Kukurovići

According to Belgrade human rights activists, Serbian soldiers killed three people and wounded two others in an attack on the village of Kukurovići on February 18, 1993.⁴⁰ Yugoslav Army (JNA) reservists stationed in the area did not react to the attack. According to witnesses, shooting first started in the cemetery and then erupted in houses where reservists were staying with newly arrived "White Eagles"⁴¹ from Priboj. Helsinki Watch representatives spoke with several villagers who provided first hand accounts of this shooting and of specific incidents of harassment and intimidation.

I.K.,⁴² a 70-year-old Muslim man from Kukurovići, and his son were shot at by Serbian soldiers:

My wife fled the village earlier, while my 16-year-old son and I stayed on. One day in late May 1992 at about 10:30 p.m., my son told me to turn off the radio since soldiers were coming towards our house. When they got to the door, they started shooting. Bullets flew over my head. I fell off the bed and did not move. [When they came into the room,] they thought that I was dead. My son hid in the other room.

The man who shot at me was Nikola Tošić, who beat up Uzeir Bulut just a few hours before they came to my house. [After they left,] my son and I spent the night on the floor.

I.K. attempted to report the incident the next morning:

We went to the army command, located in the school building in Kukurovići, to report [this incident]. They told us that this was not their patrol and that we should ask at the other army post, in Mustafin Grob. There, we were also told that this was not their patrol and that we should go ask at the Montenegrin police. We got the same answer from them. Finally, the police patrol from Priboj arrived. They found nine bullet holes in the kitchen where they shot at me.

That same day, my son and I fled. We left everything behind – corn, potatoes, wool, wheat, cement.⁴³

⁴⁰ See "The Priboj Case," The Humanitarian Law Fund, Belgrade, February 24, 1993.

⁴¹ The White Eagles (*Beli Orlovi*) are a Serbian paramilitary unit reportedly loyal to Mirko Jović and they are commonly identified by the Serbian eagle insignia they wear on their hats, lapels, etc.

⁴² Interviewed by Helsinki Watch representatives in Priboj on April 28, 1993.

⁴³ Winters are very harsh in this area, so the villagers stock-up enough food to last them through the winter. Because of this, most of them speak with resentment about what they were forced to leave behind.

D.K.,⁴⁴ a 56-year-old farmer from Kukurovići, reported that Muslims in his village were often harassed by Serbian army reservists staying nearby:

There were 40 homes in Kukurovići. They were all Muslims but there were some Serbs living in the neighboring villages. When the war broke out in Bosnia, we felt it too. The Serbian (JNA) reservists came to the village. They stayed in Serbian homes and in the local school building. There were many of them – mostly from Ivanica, Nova Varoš, and some were from Priboj.

They harassed us a great deal. They used to come to our homes and insult us, calling us Ustašas or Turks, telling us that we should go over to Alija. They often came in the morning to ask for our identification cards.

In early February, M.H. was beaten up by the reservists. He was 70 years old. He was going towards the shop when he was stopped by several soldiers. They pulled him off his horse and beat him very badly – kicked him in the head and body. The next day, five soldiers came to inquire about the incident. I complained that nobody protected us. They asked where my sons were, and I told them that they were working throughout the world. Then they cursed at me and my sons.

On February 16, at about 5:30 p.m., they set five or six houses on fire. After that only six Muslim families remained in the village. Some fled and others' homes were burned down. The houses they burned belonged to: Hajdo Kaltak, Musan Husovic (he and his wife died in the fire), Dzafer Kaltak and Uzeir Bulut (he also died in the fire).

D.K. corroborated the others' allegations and said that the February 18 attack on Kukurovići had begun in the village's cemetery:

On the day of the attack [February 18], I saw Nikola Tošić, a Serb from a neighboring village, walk armed from one end of the village to the other where the reservists were stationed. This was about noon. At about 5 p.m., he walked back to the Muslim cemetery. The shooting started from the direction of the cemetery, and it soon spread all over the village. There was shooting all over. Seeing Tošić walk to the reservists and back makes me think that this attack was planned. My house is about 200 meters below the village, so I saw those houses burn and I heard the shots.⁴⁵

H.K.,⁴⁶ a 57-year-old Muslim man from Kukurovići, also reported that JNA reservists harassed Muslims:

⁴⁴ Interviewed by Helsinki Watch representatives in Priboj, Serbia, on April 28, 1993.

⁴⁵ D.K. continued, "People that fled recently told us that there was another attack on the village on April 14, 1993. My house was burned and the houses belonging to a number of other people." The witness gave the names of several people whose houses were burned down. Helsinki Watch withholds these names to protect the victims' safety:

A week later, [two other] houses [he gave the names of the owners] were also set on fire. Out of the 40 houses in the village, 14 were burned down, as well as many barns and an unfinished house belonging to I.K.

This list of burned houses was confirmed by other refugees, and it appears to be authentic and complete as of April 20, 1993.

⁴⁶ Interviewed by Helsinki Watch representatives in Priboj on April 28, 1993.

When the war started in Bosnia, we could see houses burning on the other side of the border from a nearby hill. Women and children fled the village, and we (the remaining men) slept in the fields and in the forests.

We were afraid of the reservists when they arrived in late May [1992]. Some of the reservists were good, but many were bad, and there was shooting everywhere. No one crossed over from Bosnia. We were harassed only by "our" reservists.

They used to come to our houses every day to ask where our sons were and where were the Green Berets.⁴⁷ They used to say that this is Serbian soil, and I told them: "No, it is Muslim." They didn't harass the Orthodox [population], only the Muslims. We could not live with this pressure.

My Muslim neighbors told me to run away, but since I had a lot of cattle, more than anyone else in the village, I stayed on.

Last summer, Nikola Tošić and another reservist from Montenegro came to my house at about 11 p.m. They knocked on my door and insisted I open it. I didn't want to do that. They walked on to the other end of the village and I heard a lot of shooting there.

Like many Muslims who are harassed by Serbian reservists, V.M.,⁴⁸ a 59-year-old Muslim man from Kukurovići, stated that he eventually decided to leave his home:

The reservists from Ivanica who were stationed in the area were harassing us. We were not allowed to turn the lights on in our homes. We were not allowed to walk around freely.

My grandchild was wounded. A bullet went through his shoulder. We don't know who did it. After the kidnapping at Sjeverin,⁴⁹ I decided to leave.

I am now living with relatives. I have registered with the Red Cross and they give me only flour – no salt, no cooking oil, no money. I can't continue living like this. My house has not been burned down yet. I tried to go back, but reservists with ski masks over their faces wouldn't let me. They said that this was Serbian soil.

Many of the other villagers from Kukurovići interviewed by Helsinki Watch are now staying with relatives, friends, or former neighbors in near-by areas. Most of them have lost all of their belongings and have little hope of returning home until hostilities cease.

⁴⁷ The "Green Berets" were a paramilitary group that surfaced in Sarajevo when violence broke out in the city in late March and early April 1992. Most of the group's members are closely linked to the regular Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serbian forces continue to refer to Bosnian Muslim forces as the "Green Berets."

⁴⁸ A 59-year-old farmer from Kukurovići. Interviewed by Helsinki Watch representative in Priboj, Serbia, on April 28, 1993.

⁴⁹ The witness is referring to the disappearance of 17 people off a bus near Sjeverin. See section below.

Villages In Surrounding Areas

Muslims from surrounding villages have reported similar stories: Serbian reservists harass Muslim residents to the point that they eventually decide to flee. For example, Ms. S.,⁵⁰ a 40-year-old woman from Štrmac, a village near Kukurovići, reported that Muslims from her village had also been forced to leave the area:

The village [Štrmac] was [ethnically] mixed: there were Serbs and Muslims. The local Serbs had never bothered us. Throughout the month of April, we slept in our homes, but the atmosphere was extremely tense because we were only a ten-minute walk from the Bosnian border. All the Serbs were armed and they often shot bullets into the air. We were scared, but continued to live in our homes.

When the [Bosnian] villages of Časkovina, Kukavica, Djakovići, Hasovići and Pohrid were burned in early May, we no longer dared sleep in our houses. In the daytime, we attended to the cattle and worked in the fields, and we slept in the forest.

On June 16, 1992, seven of us were sleeping under a cherry tree below the village: my parents,⁵¹ grandfather and I. At about 11 p.m., we heard small arms fire aimed at our village from the direction of Bosnia. Someone on this side returned the fire. We fled and returned in the morning. It was raining the next night, so we decided to sleep in one of the houses at the edge of the village. As soon as we all came indoors, the shooting started and we ran away again.

On June 20, 1992, we heard a shot coming from the direction of the school in Štrmac. A group of about thirty armed men singing Četnik⁵² songs were walking in pairs through the fields towards our village. Eight of us ran away together and they were shouting: "We'll get you." Our neighbor, M.P., somehow diverted them and they went to Bosnia. I don't know who they were and where they were from.

This is when we decided to flee. We walked 60 kilometers to Priboj. My parents went back in late July, but the house was looted. [The looters] took away anything that they had any use for. We heard that our house was burned down on January 9, 1993. I don't know who did that.⁵³

⁵⁰ This woman lived and worked in Sarajevo before the war, but she is originally from the village of Štrmac, between Kukurovići and Čajniče, on the Serbian side of the border. Interviewed by Helsinki Watch representatives in Priboj, Serbia, on April 28, 1993.

⁵¹ The witness named members of her family; the names are omitted here for their safety.

⁵² During the Second World War, the Četniks fought against the occupying Axis powers and called for the restoration of the Serbian monarchy and the creation of a Greater Serbia. The Četniks also fought against the pro-Nazi Ustaša forces of Croatia and Tito's communist Partisans and committed atrocities against Muslims and Croats, primarily in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Croats and Muslims both in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina commonly refer to Serbian military and paramilitary forces engaged in the current wars in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina as "Četniks." The Yugoslav army and some Serbian paramilitary groups vehemently reject the label "Četnik," claiming they are merely defenders of their people and their land and that they are not extremists. Others, such as paramilitary units, commonly refer to themselves as Četniks.

⁵³ Helsinki Watch has not been able to confirm this allegation.

Life for H.K.,⁵⁴ a 57-year-old Muslim man from Kukurovići, and his family has been very difficult since their arrival in Priboj:

I am the only one in my family that has refugee status since I lived in Sarajevo and have Bosnian identification. Since I got here, I received one mattress, two blankets, and 12 kilos of flour, a few cans of meat, some beans and two liters of cooking oil each month. Only as of March this year has [the local Red Cross] started distributing aid to displaced persons.

This story was echoed by H.A.,⁵⁵ a 63-year-old man from Zaostro, near Kukurovići:

There were over 20 Muslim and about 50 Serbian houses in the village. In my hamlet, Zaglavice, only three Muslim families remain.

The local Serbs were good to us; it is the reservists and the police that harassed us. Policemen in blue camouflage uniforms often came, looking for guns. They wanted to know how many guns we were given by the Bosnians, and where they are. They asked where our sons were. I would tell them that one of my sons was killed in the war in Bosnia, the other lives in Priboj, and one is in Austria.

When the reserve soldiers arrived in April or May last year [1992], one drunken soldier came up to me and wanted to kill me. A Serbian neighbor, who invited him in for a cup of coffee, saved my life.

On Monday [April 26, 1993], someone set the house of the late Selim Aščerić on fire. No one was living in his house since three of his sons were in Priboj, and one in Sarajevo. Women and children in the neighborhood panicked and started running down the street.

At this point, I decided to flee. I left my house and everything behind. Since we didn't dare go through Bosnia, my wife and I walked for an hour before we caught a bus that took us to Pljevlja and from there we took another bus to Priboj.

The international community has paid very little attention to the plight of the many Muslims living in Serbian provinces who felt forced to leave their homes in this manner. It is likely that most of these Muslim refugees are not officially registered with the International Committee of the Red Cross or United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

⁵⁴ Interviewed by Helsinki Watch representatives in Priboj, Serbia, on April 28, 1993.

⁵⁵ Interviewed by Helsinki Watch representative in Priboj, Serbia, on April 28, 1993.

Abuses in the Republic of Montenegro

Hostage-Taking in Ravno

Ravno is a hamlet in northern Montenegro, near the village of Kovačevići, in the municipality of Bukovica. There are seven homes in the village and all are owned by Muslims. Most of the villagers fled after the war erupted in Bosnia.

On February 16, 1993, Bosnian Serb militia men abducted six of the eight remaining villagers and apparently killed a seventh, a 90-year-old man named Latif Bungur. The only Muslim left behind was the blind daughter of one of those abducted.

The villagers were taken to a police station in the Serb-held Bosnian town of Čajniče and held until March 17. At least 5 Muslims from the village of Selište, near Macavići, were left behind and are still believed to be detained at the time of this writing.⁵⁶ Helsinki Watch has interviewed four of the six detainees who were released.

S.B.,⁵⁷ a 62-year-old Muslim woman from Ravno, was one of the six released prisoners:

Throughout the summer [1992], we had problems with the reservists who were stationed in and around the village. The reserve policemen from Pljevlja harassed me repeatedly, insisting that I give them weapons. They searched my house twice, from top to bottom.

The first time was last summer: I was tending the cows when I saw a truck full of soldiers drive towards Ilijina Stijena [Ilija's wall]. The soldiers caught M.'s son, V. B., and one of them hit him in the chest with his rifle butt. They also found H. and E.B., and three or four soldiers started beating them with wooden sticks. This continued for about half an hour.

Meanwhile, the rest of them were searching my house. They found an ammunition container that my son brought from a military depot in Sarajevo. We use it now to store nails and screws. The special police commander, a man named Danilović, said that I would have to explain that in court. S.B., from the village of Kovačevići, was also there. He pointed a gun at me. When I saw that V.B. had fainted and that they were pouring cold water over him to revive him, I started screaming for help.

After this beating, many people fled the village. S.B., however, remained behind. The soldiers eventually returned to her home:

I was visiting my Serbian neighbor one day when I saw some soldiers crossing my field heading towards my house. When I got home, I discovered that my house was being looted. One of the looters yelled at me, cursed my Ustaša mother, and said: "She would be good for an exchange. Let's take her with us!". The other responded: "We'll leave her. She's too old for sex!" I don't know who those young men were, but they told R. [the blind woman] that she should not be afraid since they were the army. They took everything of any value from my house with them.

⁵⁶ Helsinki Watch retains the names of these detainees but will not disclose them to ensure their safety.

⁵⁷ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Pljevlja, Montenegro, on May, 1, 1993.

That night [February 16, 1993], the soldiers returned. I was alone in the house. Four of them broke into my house and dragged me out. They slapped me several times and I was covered with blood. They tied a scarf around my face and mouth. One of them kicked me in the area of the kidneys. They did not let me put shoes on, so I wore only socks. They claimed that they were taking me for a five-minute interrogation by the commander of Kovačevići. Later they screamed at me that they would tie me to a horse and drag me around.

According to S.B., the soldiers gathered the villagers together and forced them to walk:

I saw them taking L.B. away. He is no longer alive. We don't know if he died of beatings, a bullet or a knife. I started screaming "Fear God, don't fear Vlahs [Serbs]." There were six of us villagers. We walked for two hours and then we stopped at a bus stop on the road to Čajniče. One of them took a knife out and pointed it towards me and began scratching my neck with it. He said this knife was called "Turko," since it was used for slaughtering Turks. He put a machine gun against my shoulder and fired into the barn. Then he sat in my lap and asked if I would bear his Četnik. He threatened to rape me, but he didn't.

A couple of hours later, they put us on a bus and took us to the police station in Čajniče. They gave us a little to eat that night and did not harass us.

Then, the next day, they began questioning us: Had we been feeding the Green Berets? Where were our children? Who were the SDA⁵⁸ members? How much money was my husband sending from Germany? One of the four men who was interrogating me took out a knife, pulled my scarf off and threatened to cut my ear off if I did not cooperate. I told them they could cut my head off because I did not know anything.

We were questioned again the next day about the same things. Sometimes people would enter the room in which we were held and insult us. Some were in green, some were in blue uniforms. Nobody beat us.

We were held in a room in the police station that had two windows, wooden desks and chairs. It could have been a classroom. There were traffic signs hanging on the walls. I think this is where they taught driving classes. One day, they nailed wooden boards over the windows. It was dark as in a tunnel. They kept us there for three weeks. One day, they gave us breakfast and took R.'s son out. They told the rest of us to get ready. They put us in a police car and brought us to Pljevlja.

D.B.,⁵⁹ an 80-year-old Muslim woman from Ravno was also forced to leave the area. She confirmed S.B.'s testimony:

On Monday [February 15, 1993], around noon, I took my cows to the water trough and I saw two soldiers. They wished me a good day. They asked if there was any army around. Then they went into the village, where they were shooting in the air and harassing people. They did not do anything to me;

⁵⁸ Party for Democratic Action [Stranka Demokratske Akcije -- SDA] is a political party which predominantly represents Bosnia's Muslims and is the party to which Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović belongs.

⁵⁹ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Pljevlja, Montenegro, on May 1, 1993.

they were polite.

Early the next morning, somebody knocked on my door. I opened it and a soldier pointed a machine gun at me. He asked who else was in the house and ordered me to get out. I was in my night gown. There were very many people around, some in civilian clothes and some in uniforms. I think there were about a hundred of them, but I was afraid and there may have been fewer. They told me they were taking me for interrogation in the village and that I should leave my blind daughter at home. One young man kept telling me not to be afraid.

I was first in a line. I did not know where they were taking us. There were six of us. That was the last time that I saw my 90-year-old cousin, L.B. He was never seen alive again.

According to D.B., the soldiers beat and harassed some of the villagers. Then they put them in a bus and drove them to the police station in Čajniče:

I was strip searched by a woman, while another woman interrogated me. We were put in one room. It was warm and they gave us food. After spending two weeks in this room, they nailed boards across the windows. We slept on wooden chairs. After two or three days, they gave us two blankets each.

We were alone in the room. But, sometimes the soldiers would come in and ask us where our children were. They accused me of feeding the Green Berets.⁶⁰ My husband died two years ago, so my daughter and I live off social aid. We can barely feed ourselves. I demanded that they bring my blind daughter to me, but they would not.

About two weeks before we were released, they brought Z.B., a 25-year-old woman, with her two daughters, one 5 year old and one 2 year old, from Selište, near Mocevići, into our room.

On our last day in prison, one soldier took Z's brother-in-law, M., aged 15, out of the room. They told the rest of us to get our things and get ready. They said not to worry, that they would not kill us. They put all six of us in a police van and drove us to Pljevlja.

Forced Displacement

Krajinovići

⁶⁰ The "Green Berets" were a paramilitary group that surfaced in Sarajevo when violence broke out in the city in late March and early April 1992. Most of the group's members are closely linked to the regular Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Serbian forces continue to refer to Bosnian Muslim forces as the "Green Berets."

A.D.,⁶¹ a 38-year-old Muslim woman who works as a laborer reported that her village was forcibly evacuated by Serbian forces:

I am from the village of Krajcinovići a hamlet near Rajčević. There are three other Muslim houses in our hamlet. The reservists looted one of them on December 27, 1992. They shot at the house and it is now completely destroyed.

On Sunday, April 25, someone set my house on fire. There is nothing left of it. The third house was set on fire at the same time but the fire didn't catch. The police told me that they would investigate the incident.

There are no Muslims left in this hamlet. They have all fled after the kidnapping, either because of fear, or because they could not get to their jobs.⁶²

Dekari

Dekari is a hamlet that belongs to the village of Poblac̆e in northern Montenegro, near the border with Bosnia. It consists of three Muslim, and two Serbian homes. All 11 Muslims who lived in Dekari are from the same family. Two other Muslim families live in the nearby hamlet of Buhrići. They have all abandoned their homes.⁶³

A.D., a 70-year-old man from Dekari, spoke about the events that precipitated his departure.⁶⁴

We lived in fear all year, since the war broke out in Bosnia . While the regular army soldiers were stationed in the village, from May to some time last winter, it was much better. They were not bad. Then the reservists and the soldiers under contract arrived. They were based in the Šavo Cvijović' elementary school building in Poblac̆e, about a 10-minute walk from us.

H.'s daughters, M. and J., came back from Pljevlja to get something from their house, and I went over to visit. I returned home about 10 p.m. Somebody banged at my door. I asked who it was, and they said: "The army!"

My husband and I got scared, but H., A.'s son, opened the door. There were two soldiers there, one of them was completely drunk. They went on to the girls' i.e., M. and JJ house, and I heard them banging on their door.

J.D., a 23-year-old woman also fled from the same village.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Interviewed by Helsinki Watch in Priboj on April 28, 1993.

⁶² The only road to this village goes through Serbian-controlled territory in Bosnia.

⁶³ The Serbian villagers, who occasionally come to Pljevlja to shop, have told their former Muslim neighbors that their houses have been looted and burned since they left. Helsinki Watch has not been able to confirm this allegation.

⁶⁴ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Plevlja, Montenegro on May 1, 1993.

⁶⁵ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Plevlja, Montenegro, on May 1, 1993.

I fled to Pljevlja with my mother, brother and sister when Kukurovići was set on fire on March 23. [Pljevlje] is only about a 20-minute-walk from us.

On the evening of April 6 [1993], M. and I returned home for a day to pick up some dishes. My cousin A. and her son, H., our Serbian neighbor, S.C., and a Serbian woman were sitting on our porch. They all left, but S. [remained]. The three of us went indoors.

About 10:00 or 10:30 p.m., somebody banged on our door. They said it was the army. S. told us not to open [the door]. They broke into the house, and went straight for S., calling him a traitor and cursing his Serbian mother. There were two of them, both wearing camouflage uniforms. One had a rifle and the other was not [visibly] armed. I recognized one of them: his name was Milovan Petrović, or Petrić.

Milovan pushed S. in the back room. Later, I saw that S. was tied down to a bed. Milovan slapped my sister in the face and pulled her hair. He hit me and almost strangled me. I had blood pouring out of my ear. The other soldier – the one who appeared to be sober -- was trying to defend us.

S. managed to untie himself in the meantime, and tried to talk to Milovan. At one point, S. grabbed Milovan and signaled to us to go to the back room. I escaped through the window and hid in S.'s mother's house.

M. also escaped and hid in the stream. She came out the next morning after S. had spent the whole night looking around for her. My neck was bruised for days afterwards and I could hardly talk.

J.D.'s problems did not cease after she returned to Pljevlja:

When we returned to Pljevlja, we were summoned to the police station. The commander⁶⁶ wanted to know what had happened and we told him everything. He asked if people in Dekari and Pljevlja knew about this. I told him that everyone in the village knew what happened, but that we didn't tell anyone in Pljevlja yet. He said that he would hold us personally responsible if this story spread around Pljevlja. I also know that S. had problems with the military police after this.

The accounts of J.D.'s relatives, which confirm her testimony, are on file with Helsinki Watch.

Kidnapping

Helsinki Watch has received reports of kidnapping in Serbian areas bordering Bosnia-Herzegovina. Due to the similarity of the incidents, Helsinki Watch is concerned that they are connected or, in any event, represent a *modus operandi*.

Near Sjeverin

According to the Humanitarian Law Fund in Belgrade and Amnesty International, 17 or 18 Muslim men and one

⁶⁶ The witness could not identify the commander by name.

woman were kidnapped on October 22, 1992, while leaving the village of Sjeverin for nearby Priboj.⁶⁷ Although the area is supervised by the Serbian republic police and Yugoslav Army (JNA) reservists, eight armed and masked men abducted the Muslims from the bus on which they were travelling. They drove the group away in a covered truck without license plates. Those abducted were reportedly told that they would be exchanged for Serbian soldiers captured by Muslim forces, but none of those captured have been seen since October 22, 1992. *Borba*, an independent Belgrade newspaper, citing military sources, reported that the whole group had been executed in the vicinity of Višegrad.⁶⁸ This allegation could not be confirmed by Helsinki Watch.

As of February 1993, two people were arrested under suspicion that they had participated in the kidnapping; they were released ten days later because they were actors from another state.⁶⁹

Prijepolje

A similar incident occurred on February 27, 1993, in the village of Štrpci, near Prijepolje, which lies along a train route from Belgrade, Serbia, to the Montenegrin port of Bar. At Štrpci, the train route crosses a thin finger of Serbian-held Bosnia. A group of armed soldiers halted the train on the short stretch of railroad that runs through Štrpci, searched the train and ordered all Muslim passengers off. Many of the passengers boarded the train in Prijepolje and were witness to the kidnapping. In total, twenty Muslim passengers were abducted and never seen again.

A 24-year-old man, Z.B., who was a passenger on the train provided the following eyewitness account:⁷⁰

I got on the train in Požega. It was about an hour late, so we left [Požega] at about 2 p.m. I was sitting by the window, facing the back of the train. There were two middle-age ladies in my compartment and one young woman. In Užice, two other men got on.

We reached Štrpci at about 4 p.m. The train stopped abruptly. From where I was sitting, I saw a small office building with a sign that read "Štrpci," and about seven or eight men dressed in camouflage. They looked disheveled, with long hair. All were wearing either *šuharas*⁷¹ or black ski masks. They had hand grenades attached to their waists and cartridge belts over both shoulders. They each had one or two guns.

All of a sudden, a policeman dressed in blue camouflage entered our compartment and told us to have our IDs ready. He seemed a little uncomfortable. I don't know whether he was on the train with us earlier or if he got on in Štrpci.

⁶⁷ See "The Priboj Case," The Humanitarian Law Fund, Belgrade, February 24, 1993, and "Urgent Action, UA 356/92," Amnesty International, November 16, 1992, and Milan Andrejevich, "The Sandžak: The Next Balkan Theater of War?" RFE/RL *Research Report*, Vol. I, No. 47, November 27, 1992, p. 31.

⁶⁸ As reported in "The Priboj Case," The Humanitarian Law Fund, Belgrade, February 24, 1993.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Belgrade on May 12, 1993.

⁷¹ A traditional Serbian Četnik hat of black fur.

There were two girls, both about 14 or 15, standing in the aisle. The policeman told them to get in with us, so there were eight of us in the compartment. Two or three minutes later, three of those soldiers came [to our compartment]. One of them was about 28 to 30 years old, very handsome, wore his šubara sideways on his head, camouflage uniform, shoes [rather than boots], and had a foreign gun.⁷²

Two other soldiers were behind him on each side and were pointing their guns at us. He shouted at us: "Names!" and we had to tell him. One of the two men had a Muslim name. "You, come with us! Stand up! Faster! Faster!" The man left his briefcase and coat behind him. We all thought that this was some kind of a control, and that they were coming back.

I don't remember his name, but I seem to recall that his initials were F.K. He was about 50, and appeared to be a clerk or maybe a small businessman. All the people they took off the train were taken into, or behind, one of the buildings near the train – I could not see exactly.

One of the abductees had a dark complexion. Maybe he was an Arab. He was very nicely dressed. Behind him was a short, tousled soldier with a ski mask and cartridge belts.

Two more soldiers came and we had to scream our names again. All of this lasted 20 minutes to half an hour. There were about 30 to 40 soldiers for the whole train. The girls that were put in our compartment were from Rudo and they claimed that the big sign of a two-headed white eagle that the soldiers wore was not a *kokarda*,⁷³ but a symbol of the White Eagles. They said that there were many soldiers bearing such symbols in Rudo. The train then continued on its route.⁷⁴

⁷² The witness did not recognize the gun, but thought it was U.S.-made.

⁷³ The crest of the Serbian royal family used by some Serbian paramilitary groups.

⁷⁴ Other witnesses have corroborated this testimony. H.K. and A.K., brothers of N.K., a 29-year-old man who had been abducted from the train, were interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Prijepolje, Bosnia-Herzegovina on April 29, 1993. The brothers reported what they had gathered from witnesses' accounts:

Our brother went to Belgrade to visit his friends. They saw him off at the train station. The regular police who accompanied the train checked everyone's ID during the trip. People wanted to know why were they doing that, and they answered that they were trying to prevent smuggling. They also looked around for guns.

A group of about 40 men in green army uniforms stopped the train in Štrpci. They got on and introduced themselves as the Serbian Četniks (Srpski Četnici). Three soldiers simultaneously entered each train compartment. One of them checked IDs and ordered all Muslim passengers off. Another soldier would accompany this person to the door of the car.

Two other soldiers stood by each door; they took each person to two military vans. The whole operation was completed in 15 minutes. Television Serbia waited for 18 hours to report on the kidnapping.

They didn't take the Muslims from Priboj off the train, only those whose IDs were issued further south in Podgorica, Ulcinj, Bar, etc. After the kidnapping, many of the villagers left Brodarevo. As far as we know at this point, a total of 20 people were abducted from this train.

It appears that most of those abducted lived in the village of Brodarevo, a predominantly Muslim village with a small Serbian population in Bosnia-Herzegovina. According to those interviewed, there had never been more than two or three policemen in a shift in the village. At the time of the incident, there were over 15.

The day after the kidnapping, family members held a silent vigil in Prijepolje. They stood quietly for seven hours until evening fell. Two weeks later, the families met with President Milošević in Belgrade and several other senior regime officials, who promised that the abductees would be found. President Milošević also visited Prijepolje and made the same promise. Still, the abductees remain missing, and no one has been prosecuted for the kidnapping.

H.K.⁷⁵ spoke of family members' thwarted attempts to discover what happened:

Eighteen days after the kidnapping, we were received by President Milošević. [Serbian Interior Minister Zoran] Sokolović and [Serbian Prime Minister Nikola] Šainović were present at the meeting, but did not take part in the discussion.

President Milošević pointed out that this incident took place on the territory of another republic and that President Karadžić⁷⁶ gave him personal guarantees that those people would be found and the perpetrators punished. We told him that all we wanted was to get our people back and we asked him to find out whether they were alive or not. President Milošević said that he was given guarantees by President Karadžić, that Milošević's special police units were working on this case, and that several suspects had already been detained. He assured us again that all our people would be returned.

On March 25, we met a deputy prime minister of the Serbian government, Danilo Ž. Marković, [Minister of Internal Affairs Zoran] Sokolović and Minister of Justice [Tomislav] Ilić, and Secretary [of the Federal Assembly] Jokanović. They were all very kind to us. They said that they had a special unit investigating the case, and that their orders are to search the entire territory.

[Serbian Deputy Prime Minister] Marković concluded that on Thursday at 11 a.m., they would come to Prijepolje to talk to us and to the witnesses; that family members of the abductees were to continue collecting their monthly paychecks; that we should choose one person among us who would be in daily telephone contact with Minister Sokolović. They did not arrive last week, and the investigation has not produced any results.

Other family members interviewed by Helsinki Watch gave identical accounts of the incident and of their attempts to locate relatives. The repetitive sections of their interviews have been omitted here. In brief, the interviews include the following:

- **Ifeta Topuzović is missing her husband, Džafer Topuzović:**

My husband worked in Belgrade and I live in Brodarevo by myself. We have no children. I have no

⁷⁵ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Prijepolje, Serbia, on April 29, 1993.

⁷⁶ Radovan Karadžić is the leader of separatist Bosnian Serbs who have assumed control of over 70 percent of Bosnia-Herzegovina's territory. They have declared secession for these areas and have renamed them "Republika Srpska."

source of income now. I have no news whatsoever about him.⁷⁷

- **Kačo Preljević is missing his son, Safet Preljević:**

Our neighbor was with him and he saw when [the soldiers] took [our son] away. [Our neighbor] said that there were regular policemen, as well as soldiers among the kidnappers. S. is our only son. He worked in Belgrade and supported all of us -- me, my wife, and S.'s wife and their young son.⁷⁸

- **Mehrudin Alomerović is missing his father, Adem Alomerović:**

My father had a serious heart condition and he was in Belgrade, in the Military Hospital. He was on the train coming home. I don't know his diagnosis, but I am sure that he didn't have his medicines with him. He was sitting in the first car in the train.

Milošević said when he came to Prijepolje that "they would look everywhere to find these people." This was over a month ago and we still have no news. There is a lot of tension in the community after this kidnapping. My job requires me to travel, but I do not dare.⁷⁹

- **Zahir Hanić is missing his son, Muhedin Hanić:**

My son worked in the Zmaj factory in Belgrade. He last came home for the New Year's holiday. This time he didn't get home.⁸⁰

- **Atifa Memović is missing her husband, Fikret Memović, father of two:**

My husband was a train dispatcher. The dispatcher in Štrpci defended him since he [Fikret Memović] worked there for 20 years. I have not received his pay check for March. His director told me that he [is registered as being] on unpaid leave. He told me to ask for help at the municipal government [opština].⁸¹

Mahmut Memić, deputy minister for human rights and national minorities, has speculated that the kidnapping "was done by someone whose goal is to frighten the Muslims to leave for Turkey and Western Europe."⁸² The kidnapping has in fact terrorized some of the local Muslim residents into leaving their homes, and has dissuaded many others from traveling anywhere by train.

⁷⁷ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Prijepolje, Serbia, on April 29, 1993.

⁷⁸ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Prijepolje, Serbia, on April 29, 1993.

⁷⁹ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Prijepolje, Serbia, on April 29, 1993.

⁸⁰ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Prijepolje, Serbia, on April 29, 1993.

⁸¹ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Prijepolje, Serbia, on April 29, 1993.

⁸² Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Prijepolje, Serbia, on March 23, 1993.

ABUSES IN BOSNIA AND HERCEGOVINA

This section supplements Helsinki Watch's two volume report *War Crimes in Bosnia and Hercegovina*.⁸³ Helsinki Watch continues to investigate reports of all types of war crimes in Bosnia-Hercegovina. The following provides additional testimony regarding incidents of forced displacement, obstruction of humanitarian relief, summary execution, abuse in detention, and the use of human shields.

Forced Displacement

Cerska Enclave

S.C.⁸⁴ is a 34-year-old technician from Cerska, who arrived in Tuzla on April 4, 1993, via a UNHCR helicopter evacuation. S.C. reported that Serbian forces burned houses in neighboring villages before aiming at Cerska itself:

The first fights around Cerska started around April 6, 1992. When we saw what was happening in the municipality of Vlasenica, we started to organize the defense of our town. For the two months before the attack on Cerska – until June 6, 1992 – refugees were arriving from surrounding villages. I watched Serbian soldiers burn houses in Nedjeljište – 300 meters away from our positions. They have mined all the houses in the village; I have seen it with my own eyes.

Konjević Polje

A.R.,⁸⁵ a 27-year-old woman from Bratunac, arrived with the first truck convoy from Srebrenica on March 20, 1993. She reported on forced displacement from both Srebrenica and Konjević Polje:

I lived in Konjević Polje. Serbs started shelling almost a year ago, but one could still live there. After the fall of Cerska, thousands of people were moving toward us. Serbs were shelling them all the time. In that way, they were forcing people to move toward Srebrenica. When the majority arrived in Konjević Polje, the shelling became terrible. They were shelling day and night. During one of these mortar attacks, I was wounded and on that very day UNPROFOR⁸⁶ arrived. One of their doctors sewed my wound, but he didn't fix the bone.

I was evacuated from Konjević Polje to Srebrenica with everyone else. I walked day and night to come there, but Srebrenica was also not a safe place to be. I was placed in the hospital. The town was often shelled and UNPROFOR troops were there. At one point, UNPROFOR wanted to leave, but women and children stopped them. They made a human wall in front of [the UN] transporters because they didn't want a repetition of Konjević Polje. As you probably know, the UNPROFOR soldiers

⁸³ Volumes One and Two were released in August 1992 and April 1993, respectively, and are available from Helsinki Watch.

⁸⁴ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Tuzla, Bosnia-Hercegovina, on April 25, 1993.

⁸⁵ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in Tuzla, Bosnia-Hercegovina, on April 25, 1993.

⁸⁶ The United Nations Protection Forces stationed in areas of Croatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina are commonly referred to by their acronym, UNPROFOR, and are distinct from other United Nations bodies, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which also work in these areas.

moved out of Konjević Polje when the shelling got very dangerous. So in Srebrenica I was evacuated in the first convoy. We left the town in trucks, mostly wounded women with children. There were 37 people in my truck. I arrived in Tuzla on March 20, 1993.

Srebrenica and Surrounding Area

H.B.⁸⁷ an 18-year-old Muslim man from Osmače, a village near Srebrenica, spoke not only of forced displacement, but also of attacks against civilian targets:

In April [1992] I came home to Srebrenica from Zvornik where I was attending school to celebrate the feast of Bairam. I was there when the attack on Zvornik started. In late April, Serbs who lived in Srebrenica, Četniks, started to rob and burn the houses of Muslims and mistreated Muslims in the city. They were all well armed. They started with killings and at one point our people saw that there was no other way to stop them but confrontation.

In the beginning of May [1992], our men organized an ambush in the village of Potočani against some of Arkan's⁸⁸ soldiers who were arriving from Bratunac. We surprised them. N. and some other men organized the defense of Srebrenica. I know they were Arkan's soldiers because they wore black uniforms, gloves without fingers and they themselves shouted that they were the soldiers of Arkan. There were also some "White Eagles," Šešelj's soldiers. Our attack was very successful. The next day, another ambush took place in the village of Osmače and many Četniks were killed. After this, the Serbs who were still in the city left; we already had closed the roads to Zajina and Bratunac, so they went in the direction of Zalaz.⁸⁹

In June [1992], the Serbs started to shell Srebrenica. The worst thing was the bombing with MIG airplanes. These bombs destroyed everything. The houses they hit were completely annihilated. On one occasion I saw a bomb that fell between three houses -- they were all completely destroyed. There were no military targets in the town.

UNPROFOR arrived for the first time when the commander of U.N. troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Phillipe) Morillon came. Only his accompaniment was with him; before that we hadn't seen the U.N.'s soldiers. I think that only one convoy entered Srebrenica at that time, and they started to drop the parcels with food. I have heard that food now goes in regularly. The Serbian army didn't allow

⁸⁷ The witness had been evacuated from the Srebrenica area by U.N. helicopters at the end of April. He was interviewed in Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina, by a Helsinki Watch representative on April 25, 1993.

⁸⁸ Željko Ražnjatović, commonly referred to as "Arkan," is a purported leader of a Serbian paramilitary group and a member of the Serbian parliament.

⁸⁹ The witness claimed that several villages were burned by Serbian paramilitaries. Helsinki Watch could not confirm this allegation.

According to my information, they then conquered and burned the following villages: Daljegosta, Rijeka, Liješće (Liješće was later liberated [i.e., re-captured] by Muslim forces again) and almost all villages close to the Drina river.

anyone to leave the town, and they killed whomever they could.⁹⁰

The attacks escalated in the spring of 1993:

On April 12, 1993 a grenade fell around 3 P.M. on the playground close to the school. There was no shelling for more than eight days, UNPROFOR was there – the negotiations for the arrival of Canadian [U.N. troops] were underway and people were relaxed. When the shelling started there were about 50 people on the playground, some were playing soccer. They continued to shell close to that place. There were many people there not only because of the soccer match, but also because people had to pass close to that place on their way to the center of town, where humanitarian aid was given out in a former department store. Also, the school where refugees from Vlasenica, Cerska and Konjević Polje were housed is beside the playground.

The shelling lasted about five or six minutes, I think that they attacked with mortars from Sasa. When the first shell fell, a panic was created. Shells were falling like rain. I was passing close to the playground when the shelling started. One shell fell close to me and shrapnel hit my legs. Then another shell fell near me and I found myself on the ground. When the shelling stopped, I saw a massacre around me. There were parts of human bodies all around me – hands, legs, heads. I saw one man split in two parts. It was the worst thing I had ever seen during this war.

I was transferred to the hospital. At that point there were five doctors in Srebrenica. UNPROFOR soldiers were also helping to evacuate the wounded. I stayed in the hospital and then they sent me home because there was not enough room there and also because I would have better care at home. During my two days in the hospital I slept on the top of an iron wardrobe. Many wounded slept on the floor.

S.S.,⁹¹ a 23-year-old Muslim woman from the village of Zalužje, near Srebrenica, arrived in Tuzla on April 14, 1993, by truck. Before she left Zalužje, S.S. witnessed the forced displacement of, and attacks against civilians:

We lived in the village of Zalužje. My husband was a policeman and he worked in the police station in Bratunac. In the beginning of May 1992, workers at his police station, non-Serbs, got an order from Serbs in Bratunac and some soldiers who came from Serbia, to surrender their weapons so that we would avoid fights. There were about 20 soldiers, well armed; they came on one transport. When they took all the weapons from the police station, they started to go from house to house searching for policemen who were not on duty that night, collecting weapons. In a couple of days, they started the same thing in our village and other surrounding villages. Arkan's soldiers came to my village, Zalužje. Their cars said "Arkanovci." They were in uniform and were well armed; they all had fresh hair cuts and looked decent. They didn't look like Četniks at all.⁹²

⁹⁰ The witness spoke of one family who surrendered to Serbian forces because they had so little food: "I know a man from the village of Sasa who surrendered himself and his family to the Serbs because they didn't have any food left, they were starving. Nobody knows what happened to them." Helsinki Watch has not been able to confirm this allegation.

⁹¹ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative on April 24, 1993, at a refugee center in Lukavac, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

⁹² Members of Serbian paramilitary groups, referred to as Četniks, are frequently associated with men who wear long beards and hair.

That very night, when I saw them passing through my village, I escaped into the woods with my two children; the younger one was only a few weeks old. The next morning they surrounded the village and started to call people over the megaphone. They told them to pack what they needed for a one day journey and that they should move to the safe place, "Small Turkey," as they called Tuzla, and that it was not safe for us here in Zalužje anymore because it was now part of Serbia.

S.S. left her village and continued to flee the fighting before making her way to Srebrenica:

I watched and heard all that from the woods where I was hiding. We escaped to the village of Položnik and then Brezovica, but in a few days they started to shell these villages too. Finally, after about ten days, we moved to Srebrenica. It rained like cats and dogs during our trip. It was terrible, and I had to carry my baby the whole way. I stayed in the center of Srebrenica for a couple of days and then I went to stay with my mother in the village of Potocari, because there was more food there. I stayed there for three months; they shelled us every day. When our house was finally shelled, we moved back to Srebrenica again. It was mid-August. The hunger was already there, but the situation grew even worse when refugees from Žepa started to arrive. The Serbs started shelling even more often and it was dangerous to come out of the shelter, but I had to look for food.

In August (1992), I saw an air strike for the first time. Three airplanes came and they bombed the center of Srebrenica -- six people were killed and many more were wounded. At the very beginning of September, they started to bomb from biplanes.⁹³ They threw water heaters full of explosives. In one of these attacks in late December, they killed our only doctor, Nijad Danić. They dared to attack with these small planes because we have no anti-aircraft weapons.

S.S. eventually left Srebrenica and travelled to Tuzla in a U.N. truck convoy:

My convoy was stopped at a Serbian checkpoint in Dugo Polje. They took control of our trucks... I finally arrived in Tuzla on April 14, 1993. My husband is still in Srebrenica. My heart bleeds when I remember in what state I left him there. He didn't even have proper shoes. In the winter, when the snow was very high, five men would share only one pair of boots. And then the Serbs have the nerve to say that we attacked them. It's not only that we don't have enough weapons, we don't have enough shoes.

Zaseok

I.B.,⁹⁴ a 37-year-old housewife from Zaseok, a village near Zvornik, testified about the events that brought her to Tuzla:

Our village was attacked on April 6, 1992. Serbian soldiers forced us to leave the place, but there was

⁹³ A propeller plane, as opposed to jet-powered planes.

⁹⁴ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative in May 1993, in an elementary school in Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

not much killing. I haven't heard that anyone was killed that day. [After we left,] we found shelter in a village named Kula. We stayed there for seven days and then the Četniks allowed us to come back to our village.

We stayed in our homes for about two months. All of the other villages around us had already been attacked by this time. Most of them were burned. We were one of the last untouched villages. Then at the end of June [1992], they began asking us to give them our houses and move out of the village. One day, Serbian soldiers came to our house and asked my husband to sign some papers saying that all the property was donated to them. They said that then we would be transported to Hungary and that no one would hurt us.

I.B. did not believe that no one would be harmed. She and her husband fled from the village and hid in the forest, eventually arriving in Tuzla.

Obstruction of Humanitarian Aid

Helsinki Watch has continued to receive reports of soldiers intentionally and illegally obstructing humanitarian relief in eastern Bosnia. One such testimony is reproduced below.

Srebrenica and surrounding area

S.S.,⁹⁵ a 23-year-old Muslim from the village of Zalužje, fled to Srebrenica where she experienced incessant hunger. She arrived in Tuzla on April 14, 1993, by truck. According to S.S.:

The worst thing [in Srebrenica] was hunger. A newborn son of my cousin died of starvation. She had no milk to breastfeed him. He died when he was seven months old; it was in January. I know of a few other cases in which children died of hunger. From September to January, no humanitarian aid was allowed to enter Srebrenica.

In January [1993], they started to drop food from airplanes. I myself went into the woods to search for food from these planes. Those who were strong and healthy could find something, but most people didn't manage to get anything. One of the men searching for food packages with my group was killed.

UNPROFOR was placed close to the hospital and department store. At one point, when the shelling became terrible, they [UNPROFOR] wanted to move out of Srebrenica, but we women wouldn't let them.

Summary Executions

Snagova Selo

M.M.,⁹⁶ a 51-year-old Muslim man from the village of Snagova Selo is perhaps the only surviving eyewitness of a summary execution of men, women and children from his village:

⁹⁵ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative on April 24, 1993, at a refugee center in Lukavac, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

⁹⁶ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative on May 13, 1993, in the elementary school in the village of Milakije, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

On April 26, 1992, the attack on the village of Snagova started. They surrounded the place and, on April 29, they started to kill people and burn houses -- 43 of us escaped into the nearby woods, but when Serbian soldiers entered the village, they found us. They promised that they would not hurt us. They said that they were regular army troops from the fifth military district of Tuzla. They were all in uniform; some of them had an eagle sign on their right upper arm. Later I found out that they were "White Eagles."

These "White Eagles" took us out of the woods, and separated the men from the women and children. They led us into the center of the village. There were already some men from Snagova who belonged to the territorial defense forces (TO).⁹⁷ They had given up all their weapons a week or two before to a Yugoslav army (JNA) commander in Karakaj, who had given them a receipt. The commander's name was Dragan. They showed their receipts to the Četniks, trying to prove to them that there were no weapons in the village, but they didn't care. They cursed at us the whole time, and they were telling us that they would protect us.

Seven soldiers guarded the group in which M.M. had been placed. The soldiers brought the group to the front of a garage in the woods called "Radisov Han." According to M.M.:

Then the shooting started -- one of the soldiers started to shoot at us with a machine gun. It happened at 4 p.m. The shooting lasted for about 2 minutes, it seemed that all of [the seven soldiers] were shooting. I was standing close to the fence of this garage. A couple of kids ran away when the shooting started. Thirty-eight were killed there -- women, children. Six children escaped when the shooting started. My wife was killed along with the rest of them; she was pregnant. My other daughter was killed and so was my mother; they had all been standing close to me..I saw them falling.

I was wounded in the chest, but the wound was superficial⁹⁸ and I fell to the ground. Later, they left in cars in the direction of Srpsko Snagovo and I took a look. The corpses were all around me. The bodies were riddled with holes. The soldiers who killed our people call themselves Četniks. One of them said that our village is number 90 to have been "cleansed," and that he had started in Croatia. I didn't recognize anyone. They were all in uniform, and two or three had white eagles on the right upper arm.

⁹⁷ The armed forces of the Bosnian government are the republic's territorial defense (teritorijalna obrana - TO) units, which comprise local defense forces separate from the federal Yugoslav army. After World War II and during Tito's reign, the official Yugoslav position maintained that Yugoslavia, as a non-aligned state, was surrounded by external enemies, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to the west and the Warsaw Pact to the east. Most of the weapons stored in territorial defense arsenals in Croatia were confiscated by the Yugoslav Army (JNA) prior to the outbreak of war in that republic. The TO arsenals in Serbian-controlled areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina also have been confiscated by Serbian paramilitaries and the Yugoslav army. With the escalation of armed conflict throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Bosnian Presidency announced a general mobilization of the territorial defense units on April 4, 1992. The current TO units fighting on behalf of the Bosnian government are armed, in part, with weaponry taken from local TO weapons caches.

⁹⁸ He showed the scar on the left side of his chest to the Helsinki Watch representative.

Z.C.,⁹⁹ a 27-year-old housewife from Snagova Selo provided similar information. Although her information is not a first-hand account, it does confirm that of M.M.:

The JNA attacked our village of Snagovo [300 houses] at the end of April, it was April 27 or 29 [1992]. First the soldiers and tanks started to arrive in the Serbian village Srpsko Snagovo -- a 15-minute walk from us. Some people told me they counted eleven tanks in Srpsko Snagovo. Anyway, that day when the soldiers came, many people fled into the woods. The soldiers were in uniforms and some of them had *kokarda*¹⁰⁰ on their caps.

Z.C. was one of the people who fled into the forest. Although the soldiers did not find her, Z.C. later learned that they had found and summarily executed another group of people.¹⁰¹ Z.C. identified M.M. as the sole survivor of the incident and "Radisov Han" as the name of the barn where the execution took place.

Glogova

The husband of H.D., a 63-year-old woman from Glogova,¹⁰² was killed by Serbian army soldiers while he worked in the field. H.D. later witnessed a summary execution of civilians in front of a mosque:

On May 9, 1992, Serbian soldiers came to Glogova, our village. There were about forty Četniks and they came in three transports. There were also a few women with them. The soldiers went from house to house forcing people to come out and then they gathered men and women on the street, in the center of the village, close to the mosque. There were about 500 people. They separated four men from our group and they started to question them a bit further away from us. They killed one of the men, Nurija Rizvanović, and then the other one, Saban Gera. I saw it with my own eyes. Then they started to kill other people -- I watched them -- they were shooting from guns and pistols. My neighbor Camil Rizanović stood beside me; he was kidnapped. He had some difficulties with his hip; he was killed by a woman in uniform. They forced our fellow villagers, Muslims, to burn our own houses.

Later in the afternoon they found some people hiding in the woods. They threw grenades [in the direction in which they believed the people were hiding]; the people who were hiding refused to come out. Finally, the Serbs promised that they would not hurt them if they came out. They didn't

⁹⁹ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative on May 13, 1993, in the elementary school in Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

¹⁰⁰ The *kokarda* is a Serbian nationalist symbol using a double-headed eagle. During World War II, it was often equated with Serbian Četnik forces loyal to the Serbian king in exile. Some Serbian paramilitary forces in the current conflict have incorporated the insignia into their uniforms.

¹⁰¹ According to Z.C.:

Četniks found one large group of people, about fifty men, women, and children and they told them to come out of the woods, promising not to harm them. They had to come out, because they did not have any weapons with which to defend themselves. This group was then taken to a place called Radisov Han. Most of them were killed and then burned, together with some sheep, I guess in order to conceal the evidence.

¹⁰² Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative on May 13, 1993, in the elementary school in Miladije, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

have any weapons -- they were not fighting against the Serbs, just hiding. [The people eventually came out of hiding.]

The villagers eventually came out of hiding. At this point, H.D. says, the soldiers committed the worst atrocities of the day:

The soldiers brought about 50 people in front of the mosque; they lined them up beside the bank of the river. The people were forced to put their hands behind their heads. The soldiers started to shoot. The people turned their backs towards the soldiers. They were all men of different ages. The youngest ones were about 15 years old. They did terrible things to them. Intestines came out, the ... was terrible, I saw it all. They put the music on, so while they were doing all these terrible things, the music was playing. Four other men were taken into the basement of a nearby house. They tortured them there. We could hear the screams.

H.D. identified some of the attackers:

I knew some of the women who were in uniform. One of them was a daughter-in-law of Jovo Bunardija and the other one was a teacher from Kravica, her name is Olga. I've seen [other people I recognize] killing people and setting houses on fire. Some of the Četniks had black stockings over their heads. They were our neighbors and they thought that we would not recognize them, but of course we did -- we had lived together with them so many years. Some of them told us they were forced to do what they were doing. But how can you force anyone to do these kinds of things?

Abuses in Detention

Reports of abuse in detention commonly accompany other forms of abuse. Helsinki Watch continues to investigate reports of abuses in detention; two such cases are described here.

Zvornik

M.M.,¹⁰³ a 51-year-old Muslim man from the village of Snagova had been wounded during the summary execution of Muslims by Serbian forces.¹⁰⁴ He was taken to the hospital in the town of Zvornik, where he was mistreated by Serbian soldiers.

¹⁰³ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative on May 13, 1993, in the elementary school in the village of Milakije, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

¹⁰⁴ See preceding section for an account of the summary execution in Snagova.

I walked to a nearby village called Glumina. I found two of my children who managed to escape when the shooting started. I received first-aid there. The next morning the Serbian police came; they picked me up together with some other men who were wounded. We were transferred to the out-patient hospital in Zvornik.

A commander called Dragan came to interrogate me – later I heard he was a major. He questioned me about Muslim extremists and how they maltreated me in the hospital. He told me that I had to write down a list of Muslim extremists from my village. He threatened to kill me if I didn't do it. I couldn't write any names because I would be lying. A Serbian doctor wrote some false names in order to get the major to leave me alone. There were some wounded Serbian soldiers there in the out-patient department. When their friends would come to visit them, they would insult me and beat me.

On May 18 [1993], Dr. L.¹⁰⁵ put me into his car and drove me as far as he could, almost up to the last check-point in Zvornik. Then he wished me good luck and left me there to find my way to free territory. He was a good man, this doctor. I stayed in a village where some cousins of mine lived and I arrived in Tuzla in September 1992. I can't tell you where I stayed on my way toward Tuzla because this could endanger the lives of these people. I testified as to what happened in Snagova before the Bosnian government's Commission for War Crimes, and I am ready to testify to all this in front of any court.

Liplje

A.¹⁰⁶ a woman from Liplje spoke of the events leading up to her imprisonment, as well as the period of detention itself:

The Serbian army was in our village for more than a month. They arrived after the occupation of Zvornik. They pretended that they were there to protect us. They told us that they would not hurt anyone. Approximately one month later, in early May [1993], they started to take away men and women from the village. They would just come, take people from their homes and those people would never come back. On that Monday – I am not sure about the date – around 8:00 p.m., Serbian soldiers came in trucks and they gathered people from their houses, fields and from wherever they found them.

I hid in the woods for three days with my 12-year-old daughter, my youngest. The soldiers found us there and they took us, together with 14 other people, into the house of Duza Salihović. We were kept there for ten days. It was a house with two floors. I think there were about 400 people there. It was packed. There were women, children, and men. I was in one of the four rooms on the second floor. Only women and children were in my room. Men were separated from us and put into another room. There were so many of us in my room that there was no space to sit or lie.

They would allow us to go to the bathroom twice a day. Every day we would get a small piece of bread

¹⁰⁵ Although M.M. identified the doctor, Helsinki Watch withholds his name in order to protect him.

¹⁰⁶ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative on May 13, 1993, in the elementary school in Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

baked by our women in the other house. The guards would come into the room and throw the bread at us saying: "We even have to feed you." Sometimes they would salt the bread and then order us to eat it. The guards were there all the time, five to ten of them; they wore olive green uniforms. They would introduce themselves as soldiers of Šešelji. I knew some of them by name. One of the names I remember is Drago Obrenović, he was from the village Srpsko Snagovo.

According to A, the soldiers raped, beat and tortured female prisoners:

The soldiers took women and young girls out during the day and night. Some of them would return in a couple of hours and some of them would stay all day and night. Most of them would not want to talk about it, but we all knew what was going on there.

One day later, a couple of the women prisoners managed to escape and [the soldiers] got very angry with us -- they started to beat us. I was beaten myself. They asked me where my gold and money were, and when I didn't want to tell, they ordered me to lie down on the floor and then one of them put a chain around his hand and hit me in the back many times, demanding that I tell him where the gold was. Another soldier kicked me. The soldiers ordered some of the women outside, in front of the house [that served as the prison]. The soldiers then forced the women to take all their clothes off. The soldiers had set plastic cans on fire. They used this burning plastic to char the feet and hands of the women. It was horrible.

Use of Human Shields

Liplje

A,¹⁰⁷ a woman from Liplje, also told of civilians being used as human shields:

After ten days, our soldiers attacked the village. They entered the village and the Serbs forced us to come out of the house and, together with other people, walk in front of them toward our soldiers carrying a white flag. They used us as a human shield. When the village was liberated [i.e., recaptured by Muslim forces], we all knew it wouldn't stay free for long because it was close to [the Serbian-controlled town of] Zvornik, so we moved farther away. I finally came to Tuzla with other refugees. I don't know where most of my family is. I have lived in this school for almost a year and I hate it. I hope we'll be allowed to go back home soon.

As this update indicates, human rights abuses continue in Bosnia-Herzegovina and are apparently increasing in the territory of Yugoslavia. Forthcoming Helsinki Watch reports will document the repression of civil rights and civil liberties in Croatia and Yugoslavia. In addition, future reports will focus on ongoing abuses in Vojvodina, Macedonia, Kosovo, Vukovar and other areas.

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¹⁰⁷ Interviewed by a Helsinki Watch representative on May 13, 1993, in the elementary school in Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina. See section above on abuse in detention in Liplje.

Helsinki Watch was established in 1978 to monitor domestic and international compliance with the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Accords. The chair of Helsinki Watch is Jonathan Fanton and the vice chair is Alice Henkin. Jeri Laber is executive director; Lois Whitman is deputy director; Holly Cartner and Julie Mertus are counsel; Erika Dailey, Rachel Denber, Ivana Nizich and Christopher Panico are research associates; and Pamela Cox, Christina Derry, Ivan Lupis and Alexander Petrov are associates.

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