

Human Rights Abuses of Non-Serbs In Kosovo, Sandžak and Vojvodina¹

With the world's attention distracted by events in Bosnia-Hercegovina, Serbian and Montenegrin authorities have stepped up oppression of non-Serbs in Serbia and Montenegro. In particular, incidents of police abuse, arbitrary arrests and abuse in detention have been prevalent in the three regions of Serbia and Montenegro in which non-Serbs constitute a majority or significant minority: Kosovo (a province of Serbia which is 90 percent ethnic Albanian), Sandžak (a region of Serbia and Montenegro which is over 50 percent Muslim) and Vojvodina (a province of Serbia which is approximately 19 percent ethnic Hungarian, 5.4 percent Croat and 3.4 percent Slovak).²

The governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia³ and Serbia have done little or nothing to curb human rights abuses in their own territory. Instead, the authorities have at times directly participated in the abuse — through direction, control and support of the police, army, paramilitary, and judiciary — and, at other times, condoned the abuse by failing to investigate and prosecute cases of abuse by armed civilians and paramilitary squads.

¹ This statement was submitted to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe on May 6, 1994.

² Note that approximately 8 percent of Vojvodina's population identified themselves as "Yugoslav" in the 1991 census.

³ "Yugoslavia" refers to the self-proclaimed Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the union of Serbia (including the provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo) and Montenegro. Although claiming successor status to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has not been internationally recognized as a successor state to the SFRY. Still, the current Yugoslav state's declaration that it wishes to be recognized as a successor state implies that it is willing to accede to international agreements to which the former Yugoslavia was a party. Therefore, for the purpose of this statement, all international obligations assumed by the former Yugoslavia will be considered applicable to the current state, including the obligations set forth in international and regional agreements to which the former Yugoslavia was a party, particularly the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Helsinki Final Act and subsequent CSCE documents. For a general statement on the duties of successor states, see Section 208 of the *Restatement of the Foreign Relations of the United States* (Washington, DC: American Law Institute, 1986).

The treatment of ethnic minorities in Kosovo and Sandžak has only worsened since the withdrawal of the CSCE human rights monitors in July 1993. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki urges the CSCE to take all steps possible to reinstate long-term human rights monitoring missions in Montenegro and Serbia. At the same time, the CSCE should declare that Serbian officials' treatment of ethnic and political minorities in Yugoslavia — including Kosovo, Sandžak and Vojvodina — is in violation of international human rights norms. The following summary outlines the findings of Human Rights Watch's recent field research that has led it to this conclusion.

Kosovo/a⁴

Police brutality and abuse in detention have long been "business as usual" in this Albanian-populated province of Serbia. Yet in 1993 the nature and scope of the abuse expanded markedly. Police raids on homes and marketplaces now occur daily, and Serbian authorities have stepped up a campaign to push Albanians out of Serbian-populated areas. Heavily armed Serbian police, paramilitary troops, Serbian civilians, and regular army forces patrol the streets in Kosovo, creating a state of terror. Increasingly, civilians report that regular army troops are involved in the shootings and harassment, acting alone or in concert with paramilitary forces.

Kosovo is a police state. Stripped of the relative autonomy it enjoyed in Tito's time, Kosovo is now under the direct and immediate control of Serb authorities who rule with an iron fist. Contesting the legitimacy of the 1990 constitutional amendments that revoked Kosovo's autonomy, the Kosovo Albanians⁵ have refused to sign oaths of loyalty to Serbia and Yugoslavia, and instead have organized defiantly for an independent Republic of Kosova.⁶ Under pressure by police, military, and paramilitary groups, Albanians have organized their own "parallel" schools, health care, welfare system and government, headed by Ibrahim Rugova, the leader of the largest Albanian party, the Democratic League of Kosova (LDK), who was elected "president" of an independent Kosova during clandestine Albanian-held elections in May 1992.⁷

On the one hand, Serbian authorities tolerate the "parallel" activities of Albanians, allowing even Albanian human rights organizations to exist. On the other hand, Serbian authorities keep a tight lid on

⁴ "Kosova" is the Albanian language term for "Kosovo." For the purposes of clarity, unless referring to a specific Albanian organization that includes "Kosova" in its name, this report uses "Kosovo" throughout. This section is an adaptation of the introduction to Human Rights Watch/Helsinki's latest report on Kosovo/a, *Open Wounds: Human Rights Abuses in Kosovo*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, March 1994). The source of the information in *Open Wounds* is first-hand testimony gathered directly by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki representatives between September 1993 and January 1994.

⁵ Throughout this report "Albanians" refers to ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

⁶ For a more detailed historical account, see The International Helsinki Federation, *From Autonomy to Colonization: Human Rights in Kosovo 1989-1993* (Vienna: International Helsinki Federation, November 1993); Helsinki Watch, *Yugoslavia: Human Rights Abuses in Kosovo*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, October 1992).

⁷ For a description of police harassment during the Albanian elections, see Helsinki Watch, *Yugoslavia: Human Rights Abuses in Kosovo*, pp. 20-22.

Albanian aspirations for independence through a program of forced displacement, harassment, arrest, interrogation and torture.

Between July and September 1993 alone, over ninety Albanians from Kosovo were arrested and charged with terrorism and conspiracy to overthrow Yugoslavia.⁸ In a state where the judiciary has been robbed of its independence, defendants are routinely convicted solely on "confessions" signed after police beat them repeatedly over prolonged periods on all parts of their bodies, including the genitals and soles of the feet — with truncheons, rifle butts, fists or boots.⁹ Although the Yugoslav constitution offers broad protections for ethnic minorities and safeguards civil liberties in line with international standards, state security officers and police in Kosovo routinely flout basic due process guarantees. Along with torture and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment in detention, which are violations of international human rights instruments,¹⁰ trials of Albanians and other political and ethnic minorities are marked by a myriad of additional violations of the rights of the accused, from denial of the right to counsel¹¹ to a fair and open public hearing by a competent, independent tribunal¹² without unreasonable delay.¹³

Among other developments:

- o *Serbian police have stepped up detention and arrests of Albanians with former Yugoslav military experience, Albanian intellectuals, political leaders and former political prisoners.* These arrests serve two goals of Serbian authorities. First, by charging the former military officers with conspiring to overthrow Yugoslavia, police spread fear that Albanians are planning an armed revolution. Second, should an uprising occur, the arrests effectively immobilize exactly those Albanians with the specific knowledge and skills necessary for plotting an armed rebellion. While Serb authorities attribute the rash**

⁸ See Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Open Wounds* and Amnesty International, "Yugoslavia: Ethnic Albanians: Trial By Truncheon," EUR 70/01/94 (London: Amnesty International, February 1994).

⁹ Specific cases are detailed in Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Open Wounds*, pp. 61-89.

¹⁰ See e.g., Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

¹¹ ICCPR, Article 14(3)(b).

¹² ICCPR, Article 14(1).

¹³ ICCPR, Articles 9(3) and 14(3)(c). Other violations include the denial of the rights of the person arrested or detained to: information upon arrest of the grounds for arrest and any charges against him (ICCPR, Article 9(2)); a prompt appearance before a judge or other court officer authorized by law to exercise judicial power (ICCPR, Article 9(3)); adequate time and facilities for the preparation of a defense and the ability to communicate with counsel (ICCPR, Article 14(1)); equal treatment before courts and tribunals (ICCPR, Article 14(1)); a presumption of innocence unless proven guilty by law (ICCPR Article 14(2)); trial in his or her own presence (ICCPR, Article 14(3)(d)); the ability to remain silent at trial and not be compelled to testify against himself or confess guilt (ICCPR, Article 14(3)(g)); compensation for unlawful arrest or detention (ICCPR, Article 9(5)).

of recent arrests to an increase in Albanian attacks against police officers, the same authorities have been unable to point to a single fair investigation and unbiased conviction of an Albanian in connection with such cases.

- o ***Yugoslav army forces and paramilitary troops harass Albanian civilians with increasing frequency.*** In one case, detailed in *Open Wounds: Human Rights Abuses in Kosovo*,¹⁴ two Yugoslav soldiers opened fire on two young Albanians near the unmarked border with Macedonia, killing one man and seriously wounding the other. The soldiers fired without warning and continued shooting even after the men had fallen down. Paramilitary forces have also been parading throughout Kosovo, preaching hatred of Albanians to Serbian villagers and harassing anyone who stands in their way.

- o ***Serbian police have forcibly displaced Albanians in northern Kosovo.*** In the summer of 1993, in at least four villages near the thin strip of predominantly Serbian villages in northern Kosovo, heavily armed police squadrons invaded houses, conducted unwarranted searches, and brutally beat and detained Albanians of all ages.¹⁵ While such raids have occurred in the past, the new campaign includes specific threats aimed at terrorizing villagers so they will leave their homes. The "fiscal police," authorities in charge of deeds and land, supplement the raids on border villages. In September 1993, the fiscal police began demanding that Albanians present proof of ownership of their land. Inevitably, the authorities reject whatever deed the villagers produce and order them to vacate their property immediately.

International human rights groups have had an increasingly difficult time working in Kosovo. In 1993, Serb officials flatly rejected the efforts of the Special Rapporteur for the United Nations Human Rights Commission to establish an office in Yugoslavia. In July 1993, Yugoslavia expelled the long-term CSCE monitoring mission from Kosovo and elsewhere, and then denied visas to United Nations personnel and to Amnesty International after they indicated a desire to visit Kosovo. In November 1993, police in Kosovo detained and interrogated a Human Rights Watch/Helsinki researcher. Serb officials use intimidation and obstructionist tactics to prevent visitors from seeing what is happening in Kosovo.

The international community should demand that Serbian authorities immediately cease interference with the activities of local and international human rights monitors. By pressing for approval for the continuation of long-term human rights missions in Serbia and Montenegro, the CSCE could take the lead in this crucial respect. In addition, the CSCE, and other international and national bodies, should demand that Serbia immediately end police violence and arrests based on trumped-up charges, and that international observers be permitted at any and all trials.

Vojvodina

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Open Wounds*, pp. 91-95.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-10.

Approximately two million people — belonging to twenty-seven ethnic groups and thirty-three religious groups — live in the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina.¹⁶ Other ethnic groups represented include Ruthenians, Germans, Ukrainians, Romanians, Montenegrins, Russians and Romanians. All lived in relative harmony until 1990, when the regime of President Slobodan Milošević of Serbia adopted a new constitution that revoked the political autonomy that Vojvodina had enjoyed since 1974.

Inter-ethnic tensions escalated dramatically after war erupted in neighboring Croatia in mid-1991. Serbian officials drafted opponents of their regime into the Yugoslav Army and sent them to the battlefields in Croatia. More than 100,000 Vojvodina men were mobilized to fight in Slavonija (eastern Croatia). Another 100,000 fled the country to avoid the draft. At the same time, the regime began resettling thousands of Serbian refugees from Croatia and Northern Bosnia in Vojvodina, thus planting the seeds for conflict.

Most of the human rights abuses in Vojvodina have been committed by Serbian paramilitary organizations and armed civilians with the acquiescence of local authorities. In particular, from mid-1991 to early 1993, Serbian refugees, with the active assistance of the regime and extreme nationalist paramilitary groups, terrorized non-Serbs and children of mixed marriages in a systematic campaign to drive them from their homes. The refugees then occupied the abandoned dwellings. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki has documented cases in which armed civilians and paramilitary forces expelled Croats, Hungarians, Slovaks and others from many villages and towns in Vojvodina, including the following: Hrtkovci, Šid, Indjija, Beška, Petrovaradin, Slankamen, Novi Sad, Plavna, Golubinci, Kukujevci, Morović, and Sremska Kamenica.

Most native Serbs appear not to have supported the expulsions of their neighbors. But, local police and civilian authorities in many cases condoned, and even encouraged, them. In the Croat-dominated village of Kukujevci in late 1991, for example, witnesses told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki that a group of about one hundred special Serbian policemen beat dozens of non-Serbs. Within a few months, almost all of the non-Serb villagers had left. For the same reasons, almost half of 550 Croatian families had abandoned the village of Golubinci by the end of 1992.

The village of Hrtkovci provides a notorious example of the forced expulsions.¹⁷ Serbian paramilitary groups and their followers assumed control of the local government in May 1992. At that time, Hrtkovci's population of 4,000 was approximately 80 percent Croatian; by late July 1992, it was approximately 75 percent Serbian.¹⁸

According to refugees interviewed by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, Vojislav Šešelj visited the

¹⁶ According to the 1981 census, the majority are Serbs (54.4 percent), followed by Hungarians (18.9 percent), Yugoslavs (8.2 percent), Croats (5.4 percent) and Slovaks (3.4 percent).

¹⁷ Testimony from this incident is reported in Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Abuses Continue in the Former Yugoslavia: Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, vol. 5, issue 11 (New York: Human Rights Watch, July 1993), pp. 6-12.

¹⁸ Chuck Sudetic, "Serbs Force an Exodus From Plain," *The New York Times*, July 26, 1992.

village of Hrtkovci in early April 1992 and formed a new branch of the Serbian Radical Party, an extreme right-wing political party led by Šešelj. At the meeting, Šešelj reportedly stated that "all Croats who have sinned have to leave." The newly appointed secretary of Šešelj's party, a Mr. Zilić, then read the names of those Croats who would have to leave the village. Šešelj's supporters began spreading the rumor that the persons named, masquerading as activists from Croatia, had collected 300,000 German marks in contributions for the Croatian National Guard (*i.e.*, the precursor to the present Croatian Army) from Hrtkovci's local Croats and Hungarians.

After the meeting, Šešelj's supporters (refugees and locals) began terrorizing non-Serbs, breaking into homes, beating men, throwing hand grenades, and setting barns on fire. Those targeted included the local Roman Catholic priest and Milan Stefanac, who was found bludgeoned to death in a ditch.¹⁹ Many residents fled Hrtkovci in fear.

In subsequent weeks, groups of armed Serbs, refugees from western Slavonia and northern Bosnia, broke into non-Serbian homes in Hrtkovci and forced the owners to sign documents stating that they were voluntarily exchanging their properties for the homes that the Serbs had abandoned or been forced to leave in Podravska Slatina, Daruvar, Bosanski Brod, or other Croatian or Bosnian towns. Hundreds of terrified people signed such "contracts" and fled to Croatia, often with only those personal belongings they could load into their cars. Frequently, they discovered that the houses for which they had exchanged theirs had been destroyed in fighting or were already occupied by other refugees. Other non-Serbs, fearing expulsion or reprisal, legally swapped homes with Serbs who fled Croatia under similar pressures by Croatian extremists and authorities.

Militant Serbian refugees from Croatia occupied all public buildings in Hrtkovci and replaced the local government with one that condoned and promoted the persecution of non-Serbs.²⁰ Those who remained lost their jobs. The remaining non-Serbs, supported by local Serbs who believed that equal rights should be granted to all citizens of the republic, appealed to the Serbian and federal governments to stop what was happening.

In August 1992, the town experienced a respite from violence as the government of former Yugoslav Prime Minister Milan Panić attempted to protect non-Serbs in Vojvodina. Former Deputy Federal Interior Minister Mihalj Kertes was ousted amid allegations that he was personally responsible for overseeing "ethnic cleansing" in Vojvodina. Ostoja Sibinčić and his deputy, Rade Čakmak, were also ousted and charged with incitement to violence. The authorities set up police checkpoints at the entrances to the village and removed signs of "Srbošlavci" — the Serbian name for Hrtkovci. Refugees who illegally occupied homes were evicted, and the property was returned to its owners. Life seemingly returned to normal, that is, until Panić lost the December 1992 election to Milošević.

¹⁹ Ibid. See also Florence Hartmann, "Mass Expulsions from Vojvodina," *Le Monde*, June 16, 1992.

²⁰ They did this by holding a session of the town council that was also attended by a few locals who approved of their methods. They "elected" Ostoja Sibinčić, a Yugoslav Army officer (who had been fired from the army), as the new mayor, in effect overthrowing the legal government. At another session, they renamed Hrtkovci as Srbošlavci. As a result, when Human Rights Watch/Helsinki representatives first visited Hrtkovci in July 1992, 350 families had already left.

In December 1992, after Panić fell from power, Sibinčić and Čakmak were released pending trial. Following their release, pressure once again increased on non-Serbs in Vojvodina and local Serbs who defend them, as well as on some of the refugees from Croatia and Bosnia who have refused to return to their former Yugoslav republics to fight. To this day, Sibinčić governs the village and his people continue to terrorize the remaining few Hungarians and Croats.

Over the past three years, an estimated 60,000 Hungarians and 40,000 Croats have been forced to leave Vojvodina. Hundreds of opposition leaders and many of their supporters who lost their jobs were forced to emigrate. Ethnic, social and political structures of the province have been changed.

The regime has changed its methods, too. In recent months, the Serbian regime has stopped the campaign of terror against minorities in Vojvodina, relying instead on manipulation through the political process and the media. The influx of Serbian refugees and the exodus of minorities has secured Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) almost total political domination of Vojvodina. The only two political parties with any major influence in Vojvodina besides the SPS are Šešelj's Radical Party and the Democratic Union of Vojvodina Hungarians, or (DZVM).²¹ The SPS and Radicals now rule Novi Sad in a coalition. Other parties have no access to the electronic media. In a country where few people can afford to buy newspapers, the independent press has little impact. Private businesses and foreign organizations that aid the opposition are being harassed by the regime.

To the extent that violence against ethnic minorities has abated somewhat in Vojvodina, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki encourages the government of Serbia to continue in the same vein. At the same time, however, we recommend that the CSCE continue to monitor the situation carefully. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki urges the CSCE and other international and national bodies to press Serbia for full human rights for ethnic and political minorities in Vojvodina, including equal access to the press and freedom of the press.

Sandžak

Bosniaks ('Bošnjaci'), as the Slavic Muslims of Sandžak frequently refer to themselves, constitute a slight majority in this region of 8,867 square kilometers, which straddles the border of Montenegro and Serbia, between Bosnia and Kosovo. Serbs and Montenegrins make up the rest of the population, which totals about 440,000. Although it is a remote, impoverished mountainous area, Sandžak is strategically and politically important to rump Yugoslavia as Serbia's passageway to the Adriatic. In addition, Sandžak Muslims have for centuries maintained close family, cultural and business links with the Muslims in Bosnia. Many settled in Bosnia and, when the war broke out in that country, later joined the predominantly Muslim Bosnian army.

Inter-ethnic relations in Sandžak deteriorated when the war in Bosnia erupted in mid-1992. By that time, Yugoslav police and military authorities had armed members of the Serbian and Montenegrin

²¹ In the most recent elections for the Serbian Assembly in December 1993, the DZVM lost two seats, leaving it in control of five.

populations in Sandžak. (The same is true for Kosovo, as well as for some other regions of former Yugoslavia.)²² Serbian irregulars have frequently attacked Muslim civilians in Sandžak.

Some of the incidents are attributable to Serbian and, to a lesser extent, Montenegrin paramilitary bands that are based in, or pass through, Sandžak on their way to eastern Bosnia (where some of the bloodiest fighting of the war has taken place). En route, the paramilitaries shot at mosques and Muslim-owned shops and homes and harassed the non-Serbian population in Sandžak. The paramilitaries were often joined by reserve soldiers of the Yugoslav Army, which at that time overtly participated in the war in Bosnia. The Montenegrin town of Pljevlja was among the hardest hit – over forty Muslim shops were destroyed in less than one year.

Human Right Watch/Helsinki has documented at least ten murders of Muslim civilians in Sandžak by Serb irregulars between April 1992 and April 1994; many more were wounded. Over fifty non-Serbs were abducted in the same period. These incidents include:

October 22, 1992: a still-unidentified group abducted seventeen Sandžak Muslims from a bus in the village of Mioče. All were civilians and most were on their way to work or to school in Priboj. None of those abducted were ever seen again.

February 27, 1993: at least nineteen Muslim civilians and one Croat were abducted from a train running through Sandžak, en route from Belgrade to the Montenegrin port of Bar. The train was stopped by a group of armed men in the village of Štrpci on a short stretch of track that runs through Bosnia. None of those abducted were ever seen again.²³

In both cases, Yugoslav authorities showed little will to identify or arrest the perpetrators despite pledges by numerous senior Serbian officials, including President Milošević, to bring to justice those responsible for the abductions and disappearances. The public prosecutor never began a formal investigation. Although parliamentary commissions were formed, they failed to interview many of the most important witnesses in each case, including the bus driver, the train engineer, conductors, and Serbian policemen stationed aboard the train. The results of their investigations have not been made public. Police arrested only one man in connection with the cases, Milan Lukić, a Belgrade resident and a volunteer soldier with the Bosnian Serbs who commanded a paramilitary group known as "The Avengers." Given the half-hearted investigation, this gesture appears to be no more than a cosmetic attempt to satisfy the international public opinion and the families of the abducted passengers.

Bosnian Serb troops began crossing the border from Bosnia into Sandžak to raid Muslim villages in early 1993. In each attack, the troops beat villagers and looted and burned homes. On February 16, 1993, in an attack on the village of Ravne, Montenegro, Bosnian Serb militiamen abducted six villagers from sixty-two to eighty-one years of age, and killed a ninety-year-old man.²⁴ The troops brought the captured

²² See Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Open Wounds*, pp. 98-99.

²³ Testimony from this incident is reported in Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Abuses Continue in the Former Yugoslavia*, p. 25.

²⁴ Testimony from this incident is reported in Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Abuses Continue in the Former*

villagers back across the border to the Bosnian Serb-held town of Čajniče and released them a month later. During the same period, the Bosnian Serbs abducted two other women and three children from the Sandžak village of Močavići. Months later, they exchanged them for Serbian soldiers held prisoner in Goražde.

According to interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, members of the Yugoslav army and police have allowed Bosnian Serb irregulars to enter the territory of Sandžak and have made no attempts to protect the non-Serbian villagers. Numerous survivors have testified that regular Yugoslav army troops and reservists abetted the Bosnian Serb paramilitaries, and in some cases participated themselves in the raids. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki is concerned that these activities were coordinated by Belgrade authorities in order to "cleanse" Muslims from Sandžak's border region with Bosnia.

To escape this new wave of persecution, thousands of Muslims, including entire families, have emigrated to Western Europe, the United States and Canada. Many of those remaining have purchased weapons (often from Serbs) to defend themselves if the Bosnian war spills over to Sandžak.

In late 1993, police violence against Muslims elsewhere in Sandžak intensified. Police in Serbia and Montenegro now raid Muslim villages daily under the pretext of weapon searches, harassing the women and children and beating the men. Human Rights Watch/ Helsinki has interviewed scores of witnesses and victims of such abuse during recent visits to the area and has found evidence that police routinely use unjustifiable force during these so-called weapons searches. Witnesses testify that police beat them with rifle butts and clubs over their entire bodies and heads, mostly on their hands and the soles of their feet. After such torture, many victims were unable to walk; few received proper medical aid. When the villagers have no guns to surrender, police threaten them with further beatings unless they deliver weapons to the police by a certain date. Police thus coerce them into selling their meager property, usually a cow or a few sheep, to buy a gun in the hope that they will be spared additional abuse.

After protests by local human rights groups, the Yugoslav Interior Ministry formed a commission to investigate allegations of police abuse in the town of Prijepolje. The commission interviewed witnesses in the same building where they were previously beaten, frequently in the presence of the police officers who allegedly had beaten them.

Also in 1993, authorities clamped down on the predominantly Muslim political party, the Party of Democratic Action (Stranka Demokratske Akcije — SDA),²⁵ arresting dozens of SDA activists. In September 1993, the authorities issued an arrest warrant for SDA President Sulejman Ugljanin, who was visiting Turkey, where he remains at present. Twenty-five senior SDA activists were charged with undermining rump Yugoslavia's territorial integrity and are still awaiting trial in Novi Pazar. Montenegrin authorities unleashed a similar campaign late last year. By January 31, 1994, two dozen SDA leaders had been arrested. They are being held in the Bijelo Polje prison, awaiting trial.

Yugoslavia, pp. 20-22.

²⁵ When former Yugoslavia began to disintegrate in 1991, prominent Sandžak Muslims formed the SDA to promote their political interests. A branch of the SDA also was formed in Bosnia under Alija Izetbegović, who is now president of Bosnia.

Lawyers of all the accused contend that their clients have been subjected to severe psychological and physical torture. Local police allegedly insulted, threatened and beat those in detention. Montenegrin police took several of the defendants across the border to the Bosnian Serb-held towns of Foča and Čajniče, where they tortured the prisoners until they signed "confessions" stating that they were planning an armed rebellion. Authorities continued to violate basic due process guarantees after they returned these defendants to jail in Montenegro. In particular, for weeks, authorities refused to grant the prisoners access to either defense counsel or medical treatment, although they all had serious wounds from the beatings. The defense has been hampered by the investigative judge's refusal to allow review of all relevant court documents.

As of this date, more than fifty Sandžak Muslims have been murdered or are missing, hundreds have been displaced, and thousands have fled the country. More than fifty are awaiting trial on spurious charges. Through these repressive practices in Sandžak, the Yugoslav authorities have accomplished several goals: the SDA, the only representative of the Sandžak Muslims, has been effectively crushed. Once peace accords are signed in Bosnia and Croatia and international attention shifts to the burning issue of minority rights in rump Yugoslavia, the Sandžak Muslims will have no voice. More ominously, the Milošević regime appears determined to encourage the flight of the Sandžak Muslims through deliberate repression.

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki implores the CSCE to devote renewed attention to the gross human rights abuses in Sandžak. As with Kosovo, it is imperative that the CSCE immediately attempt to reinstate long-term human rights monitoring missions in Sandžak. Moreover, the CSCE, United Nations and other international and national bodies should strongly urge Serbian and Montenegrin authorities to put an end to the reign of terror against non-Serbs in Sandžak.

General Recommendations

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki calls on the CSCE to take immediate steps to re-establish a long-term human rights monitoring mission throughout Serbia and Montenegro, particularly in Kosovo, Sandžak and Vojvodina. The United States and all other nations concerned about protecting human rights should, visibly and vocally, support such efforts. The CSCE, the United Nations and all nations of the world should demand that Serbia and Montenegro abide by international human rights standards within the territory they control. The leaders of Serbia and Montenegro, separately and together, should be called on to demonstrate the steps they are taking to address past human rights violations and to prevent future violations in line with international safeguards. If Serbia and Montenegro continue to flout international human rights guarantees, the CSCE, United Nations and other international and national bodies should explore all options for commanding their compliance.

* * *

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, formerly Helsinki Watch

Human Rights Watch is a nongovernmental organization established in 1978 to monitor and promote observance of internationally recognized human rights in Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Middle East and among the signatories of the Helsinki accords. Kenneth Roth is the executive director; Cynthia Brown is

the program director; Holly J. Burkhalter is the advocacy director; Gara LaMarche is the associate director; Juan E. Méndez is general counsel; and Susan Osnos is the communications director. Robert L. Bernstein is the chair of the executive committee and Adrian DeWind is vice chair. Its Helsinki division was established in 1978 to monitor domestic and international compliance with the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki accords. It is affiliated with the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, which is based in Vienna. The staff includes Jeri Laber, executive director; Holly Cartner and Julie Mertus, counsels; Erika Dailey, Rachel Denber, Ivana Nizich and Christopher Panico, research associates; Christina Derry, Ivan Lupis, Alexander Petrov, and Isabelle Tin-Aung, associates; and Zeljka Markić and Vlatka Mihelić, consultants. The advisory committee chair is Jonathan Fanton; Alice Henkin is vice chair.