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News Flash

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Croatia: Gotovina to go to The Hague

The arrest of the former Croatian Army General Ante Gotovina is a major step in addressing impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the 1991-1995 war in Croatia, Amnesty International said.

Ante Gotovina, who was arrested yesterday in Spain, is indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (Tribunal) in The Hague on seven counts of persecutions, murder -- including the murder of at least 150 Croatian Serbs by means of shooting, burning or stabbing -- plunder of property, wanton destruction of cities, towns and villages, deportation and forced displacement and other inhumane acts. These crimes were allegedly committed in 1995 during Operation "Storm", when Croatian forces retook areas under *de facto* Croatian Serb control. Ante Gotovina went into hiding in June 2001, allegedly after the Croatian authorities had informed him of a sealed indictment against him.

"With Ante Gotovina in custody, the Croatian authorities must now address impunity in proceedings before domestic courts, for all crimes allegedly committed by members of the Croatian Army and police forces," Omer Fisher, Amnesty International's researcher on Croatia said.

"The task of tackling impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity should not be left only to the Tribunal."

To date, efforts by the Croatian judicial system to bring perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed against Croatian Serbs to justice have been largely insufficient. Proceedings before domestic courts have only resulted in a handful of convictions and impunity remains widespread.

Croatia was formally granted the status of European Union (EU) candidate country in June 2004. The failure of the Croatian authorities to fully cooperate with the Tribunal, including by arresting and transferring to the Tribunal's custody Ante Gotovina, delayed the launch of EU accession negotiation. EU member states decided to begin accession talks with Croatia only on 3 October 2005, after the Tribunal Prosecutor concluded that "for a few weeks now" Croatia had been cooperating fully with the Tribunal.

Public Document

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