

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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**Arrest of doctors, journalists
and others**

28 November 1991

YUGOSLAVIA:

**Dr Vesna Bosanac (f)
Dr Juraj Njavro
Siniša Glavaševi_
Branimir Polovina
Marin Vidi_-Bili and others**

Amnesty International is concerned that the above persons, together with an unknown number of others, were arrested on 20 November 1991 by federal army troops (Yugoslav National Army - JNA) in Vukovar hospital. These arrests followed the capture of the town of Vukovar in Croatia by the JNA after a three-month siege.

Dr Vesna Bosanac, aged 42, a specialist in paediatrics, was acting head of Vukovar hospital during the siege; Dr Njavro was chief surgeon in the hospital. Siniša Glavaševi_, aged 31, is a journalist for Radio Vukovar, and Branimir Polovina, aged 41, a radio technician. The latter two persons were last seen at 9am on 20 November within the hospital grounds. Some reports indicate that Siniša Glavaševi_ was in the hospital at the time of his arrest because he had been wounded, and that his colleague, Branimir Polovina, a Serb, refused to leave him when JNA soldiers entered the hospital. Marin Vidi_-Bili is a Croatian government representative in Vukovar.

Reports indicate that they are all detained in Sremska Mitrovica prison in Serbia and that Dr Bosanac was visited there by members of an European Community monitoring team on 27 November.

On 23 November Serbian radio (Radio Belgrade) referred to Dr Bosanac as "alias Dr Mengele" and said that she and her assistant, Dr Njavro, had been detained by the JNA "to explain the existence of an improvised, open grave facing the hospital, where there are 93 mutilated bodies lying on the grass" and "to explain the cause of death of 15 children who were found in a house near the hospital with numbered plates round their necks." The radio report also accused Dr Bosanac and Dr Njavro of having given priority in treatment to Croatians while treating Serbs like "dogs". The Croatian authorities describe Dr Bosanac as a responsible and conscientious professional, and deny that she discriminated in her treatment of patients.

Press reports from Vukovar following its capture described the city as destroyed, with unburied corpses littering the streets. A report in the French newspaper Le Monde quoted Dr Bosanac as saying on 19 November that there were 400 patients in the hospital. It said that a further 400 civilians had taken refuge in the hospital, which was in an area where the last Croatian forces resisting the JNA had withdrawn. Other reports of Vukovar during the siege described the hospital as operating in desperate conditions, and reduced to using torn strips of clothing for bandages.

On 20 November the Croatian Minister of Health said that the JNA had broken an agreement reached the previous day, that the evacuation of Vukovar hospital would be supervised by

the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and had ejected ICRC representatives from the hospital.

The same day Radio Belgrade said that about 500 members of the Croatian National Guard (military) had been hiding among some 1,000 patients in Vukovar hospital.

On 27 November the Croatian Minister of Health stated that, following the evacuation of Vukovar hospital, only 128 of a total of about 440 patients and only 72 out of a total of about 320 hospital staff had so far been handed over to the Croatian authorities. He said that it was feared that those missing had been arrested or even killed.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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On 25 June the republic of Croatia declared its independence from the Yugoslav federation, a move fiercely contested by the republic of Serbia and the JNA in the name of the protection of the Serbian minority in Croatia and the maintenance of the Yugoslav state. In the course of the ensuing armed conflict about one third of Croatia's territory has fallen to JNA forces and Serbian paramilitaries. AI believes that all sides to the conflict have committed atrocities, including the extrajudicial execution or deliberate and arbitrary killing of unarmed civilians and surrendered or wounded combatants.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/faxes/airmail letters:

For the Federal Secretary for National Defence and the President of Serbia:

- expressing concern about reports of the detention of Dr Vesna Bosanac, Dr Juraj Njavro, Siniša Glavašević, Branimir Polovina, Marin Vidić-Bili and others on 20 November 1991;

- urging that if they have neither used nor advocated the use of violence they be released or failing this, that they be granted full legal safeguards, including access to their families, and to lawyers and doctors of their choice;

- requesting information about the fate of some 500 patients and medical staff from Vukovar hospital who are alleged to have been evacuated but whose present whereabouts following their evacuation by JNA forces, is at present unknown to the general public;

- noting that Yugoslavia is a signatory to the Geneva Convention of 1949, which explicitly states that in the case of armed conflict civilians and members of armed forces who have laid down their arms should be treated humanely.

For the Director of Sremska Mitrovica prison:

- expressing concern about reports of the detention of Dr Vesna Bosanac, Dr Juraj Njavro, Siniša Glavašević, Branimir Polovina, Marin Vidić-Bili and others on 20 November 1991;

- asking for information about their present situation and whether any charges have been brought against them;

- urging that they be granted full legal safeguards, including access to their families, and to lawyers and doctors of their choice.

APPEALS TO

1) Federal Secretary for National Defence:

General Veljko Kadijević

Dear General

Savezni sekretar za narodnu odbranu

Kneza Milosa 35

Belgrade, Yugoslavia

Telegrams: National Defence Secretary Kadijevic, Belgrade, Yugoslavia

Faxes: + 38 11 636 775

2) President of Serbia:

Mr Slobodan Milosevic

Predsednik Republike Srbije

Marsala Tita 14

Belgrade, Yugoslavia

Telegrams: President of Serbia Slobodan Milosevic, Belgrade, Yugoslavia

Faxes: + 38 11 682 167

Dear President

3) Director of Sremska Mitrovica prison:

Upravnik

KPD

22000 Sremska Mitrovica

Yugoslavia

Telegrams: Director KPD, Sremska Mitrovica, Yugoslavia

Dear Director

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Yugoslavia in your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 January 1992.