

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

**AI Index: EUR 63/03/94
Distr: UA/SC**

UA 39/94

Deliberate and arbitrary killings / fear for safety

4 February 1994

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA Shelling of civilians queuing for aid in the besieged town of Sarajevo

Amnesty International is concerned at new reports of the deliberate targeting of civilians by Bosnian Serb artillery around Sarajevo. According to press reports, nine people, including three children, were killed on the afternoon of 4 February 1994 when shells hit a group of civilians who were waiting for the distribution of humanitarian aid in the Dobrinja suburb of Sarajevo. Three shells landed within minutes of each other. Many of the casualties were people hit by the second and third shells as they assisted survivors of the first shell hit. Beside the nine dead at least 15 people were wounded. Bosnian Serb forces are reported to have denied responsibility for the incident.

Amnesty International fears there may be an intensification of shelling resulting in more deaths and injuries among the civilian population of Sarajevo. Such deliberate and arbitrary targeting of people uninvolved in an armed conflict is expressly prohibited by international humanitarian law.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The siege of Sarajevo took hold in May 1992. Artillery of the Yugoslav National Army, which in Bosnia was quickly transformed in the army of the rebel Bosnian Serbs, was positioned on the hills overlooking the town. Since May 1992, when at least 20 people were killed by a shell as they queued for bread in the centre of the town, there have been frequent incidents in which civilians have apparently been deliberately and arbitrarily killed. Despite repeated denials of responsibility by the Bosnian Serb forces, who have tried to claim that Bosnian Government or Muslim forces have deliberately caused the incidents, it is clear that the Bosnian Serb artillery is largely responsible for them.

Among other similar incidents are the killing of 12 people queuing for water in Dobrinja July 1993. On this occasion a mortar shell appeared to have been aimed at the queue from Serbian position a few hundred metres away. Hospitals and schools have also been hit, killing civilians, in what appear to have been other deliberate attacks on unarmed civilians.

International humanitarian law is unequivocal in stating that in an armed conflict, people who take no active part in the hostilities must be distinguished from those who do. People who are uninvolved in a conflict, including most civilians, must be distinguished from military personnel and others who are directly involved and able to influence the course of the conflict. This principle is directly derived from the protection of the individual enshrined in Article 3 common to the four Geneva conventions of 1949.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters either in English/French/German or in your own language:

- condemning this latest incident in which at least nine civilians queuing for humanitarian aid were killed by Bosnian Serb artillery in the Dobrinja district of Sarajevo on 4 February 1994;
- noting that on many previous occasions Bosnian Serb artillery has deliberately targeted civilians and emphasizing that Amnesty International does not accept the denials issued by the Bosnian Serb authorities;
- stating that international humanitarian law requires the military to distinguish civilians from combatants;

- calling for the chain of command to be strengthened to ensure that such incidents are not allowed to reoccur;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation of the latest incident and for those suspected of ordering or perpetrating the incident to be brought to justice;
- stressing that Amnesty International is concerned for victims of all national groups and has repeatedly appealed to all sides in the conflict.

APPEALS TO

1) President of the Republic of Serbia:

Slobodan Milošević

Predsednik Republike Srbije

Andrijevićevac 1

11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

Telegrams: President Milošević, Beograd, Yugoslavia

Faxs: + 381 11 682 167

Salutation: Dear President

2) The Representative of the Bosnian Serbs:

Dr Radovan Karadžić

Biro Republike Srpske

Mošćevićevac 8

11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

Telegrams: Representative of the Bosnian Serbs Karadžić, Beograd, Yugoslavia

Faxs: + 381 11 235 1213

Salutation: Dear Dr Karadžić

3) Commander of Serbian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina:

General Ratko Mladić

Biro "Republike Srpske"

Mošćevićevac 8

11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

Telegrams: Commander of Serbian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mladić, Beograd, Yugoslavia

Faxs: + 381 11 235 1213

Salutation: Dear General Mladić

COPIES TO: Embassies of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 18 March 1994.