

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 146/94 Deliberate and arbitrary killings of Muslim civilians in Gora de area

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Amnesty International is concerned about reported deliberate and arbitrary killings of Muslim civilians by Bosnian Serb armed forces in the village of Stanici in eastern Bosnia and fears that similar abuses against civilians elsewhere in the Gora_de area could be taking place.

At least 10 Muslim civilians were reportedly killed by the Bosnian Serb army in Stanici on 4 April 1994. Officials of the UN Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that Bosnian Serb soldiers had burnt down all houses in the village and had picked up a group of fleeing villagers one by one and shot them on sight. The victims included a handicapped man and two women in their eighties and nineties. A news report in the *New York Times* of 8 April 1994, based on reports by UN relief workers, mentioned the same attack on the village and said Bosnian Serb forces had used gas shells to empty the village of its inhabitants.

A UNHCR representative said on 10 April that there was panic reigning south of Gora_de and in the town itself, as refugees coming into the town brought reports of people being killed in villages overrun by the Bosnian Serb armed forces.

Amnesty International is urging the Bosnian Serb political and military authorities to do everything in their power to control their armed forces and protect the civilians in the areas of combat.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The town of Gora_de, some 35 miles southeast of Sarajevo, held by the mainly Muslim Bosnian Government forces and inhabited by approximately 65,000 people, has been proclaimed a "safe area" by the UN for over a year. Gora_de has been besieged by Bosnian Serb armed forces for nearly two years and until now only four UN military observers have gained access to the town.

Negotiations to station an UNPROFOR regiment, comprised of Ukrainian peacekeepers, in the town from mid-April have been interrupted by the Bosnian Serb army's attack, which started at the end of March. Since then, 156 people have reportedly been killed and 646 wounded, mostly victims of artillery wounds. Bosnian Serb armed forces have been shelling civilian targets such as a hospital and a refugee centre.

After North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) air strikes on Gora_de on 10 and 11 April, Bosnian Serb forces reportedly stopped their artillery attack. However, the situation in the entire Gora_de area remains unstable, and fighting might resume at any time.

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

- expressing deep concern about reported deliberate and arbitrary killings of Muslim civilians by Bosnian Serb armed forces in the village of Stanici, and stating Amnesty International's fear that similar abuses against civilians

may have occurred elsewhere in the Gora_de pocket;

- urging the Bosnian Serb political and military *de facto* authorities to take urgent measures to ensure that the local security forces or irregulars are effectively controlled and that strict orders are issued to ensure that they abide by international human rights and humanitarian law standards;

- urging them to initiate thorough and impartial investigations into reported killings of local Muslim civilians;

- condemning the deliberate targeting of civilians by Bosnian Serb artillery and stating that international humanitarian law requires the military to distinguish civilians from combatants;

- stressing that Amnesty International takes no position on the issue of international armed intervention and is concerned for victims of all national groups in the conflict.

APPEALS TO:

Leader of the Bosnian Serbs

Dr Radovan Karad_i_
Biro Republike Srpske
Moše Pijade 8
110000 Beograd
Yugoslavia

Faxes : +38 111 338 633

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

Salutation: Dear Dr. Karad_i_

General Ratko Mladi_
Biro Republike Srpske
Moše Pijade 8
110000 Beograd
Yugoslavia

Faxes : +38 111 338 633

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

Salutation: Dear General Mladi_

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 25 May 1994.