

UA 120/98

Fear for safety

17 April 1998

**BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA** Bosnian Serb returnees in Drvar municipality

Vojin Trnini\_ (killed)

Lela Trnini\_ (killed)

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Amnesty International is deeply concerned about the lack of safety and security for Bosnian Serbs who are returning to the Drvar municipality in western Bosnia-Herzegovina where levels of harassment are on the increase in line with greater numbers of returnees.

The most recent concern stems from the murder, on 15 April 1998, of an elderly Bosnian Serb couple who returned to their pre-war home village in the municipality in early April, after displacement in the Bosnian Serb entity.

The bodies of the couple, named as Vojin and Lela Trnini\_, were discovered by soldiers from the NATO-led Stabilization Force (SFOR) on 16 April. Both victims had reportedly been shot in the back and the man had also suffered stab wounds. The house, in which they had been temporarily accommodated after finding their own house occupied by Bosnian Croats (themselves displaced persons from other parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina), had been set alight.

The United Nations mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina has strongly condemned the murders and has ordered the UN International Police Task Force (IPTF) to increase its presence in the area. The IPTF has launched an investigation into the murders and the bodies have been transferred to Sarajevo for autopsy. Furthermore the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Bosnia-Herzegovina, Elisabeth Rehn, has demanded the immediate suspension of a number of Bosnian Croat officials responsible for the administration of the area, including the Cantonal Interior Minister, the Drvar Deputy Mayor and the Chief of Police.

Harassment of Bosnian Serb returnees in Drvar has been continuous since early 1996 but increased significantly in 1997 and 1998. A large number of houses belonging to Drvar Serbs have been set on fire and in several incidents Drvar Serbs visiting their old homes, prior to returning, have met with violent crowds who threw stones at them or beat them up. In most cases the Bosnian Croat authorities in the region were notified in advance of the visits or the returns but had done little to provide extra security. Similarly, very few of these incidents have been properly investigated by the local authorities. Amnesty International is concerned that incidents such as these will cause severe setbacks to the precarious and delicate process of minority returns (the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their original homes which are in areas now administered by other nationalities) in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Before the outbreak of armed conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina in April 1992, the municipality of Drvar had a population of some 17,000, 98 per cent of them Bosnian Serbs. For most of the conflict, Drvar remained under the control of the Bosnian Serb *de facto* authorities. In late 1995 Drvar fell to the *Hrvatsko vijeće odbrane* (HVO), the Bosnian Croat army, and most of the Bosnian Serb population fled. Since the end of the conflict, it is estimated that some 6,000 displaced Bosnian Croats have settled in the municipality and a further 2,500 HVO troops and family members are stationed there. A large number of vacant and habitable houses are present in the municipality and most of Drvar's

Bosnian Serb former residents- most of whom became displaced in the Bosnian Serb entity - have indicated that they are keen to return to their homes. Drvar has thus been selected as a priority area for minority return by the international community.

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

- expressing deep concern about the murders of two elderly Bosnian Serbs in Drvar municipality on 15 April 1998 and asking the local Bosnian Croat authorities to do all in their power to assist international investigators (in particular the IPTF) in investigating these crimes;
- urging the local authorities to form and cooperate with a multi-ethnic police force which will be under specific instructions to protect Bosnian-Serb returnees in the municipality from harassment and violence, both during visits to their pre-war homes and after they have resettled in their homes;
- urging the local Bosnian-Croat authorities to investigate all outstanding cases of arson and other attacks on returnees' lives and property, and to bring to justice anyone thought to have been involved in these attacks.

**APPEALS TO:**

Please note - fax numbers may be very difficult to obtain

**Chief of Drvar police**

Ivan Jur\_evi\_

Šef policijske postaje op\_ina Drvara,

80000 Drvar, Bosnia-Herzegovina

**Telegrams: Chief of police, Drvar, Bosnia-Herzegovina**

**Faxes: + 387 80 820 092**

**Salutation: Dr Mr Jur\_evi\_**

**Deputy mayor of Drvar**

Drago Tokma\_ija

Zamjenik Predsjednika Op\_inskog Vije\_a Drvara

80000 Drvar, Bosnia-Herzegovina

**Telegrams: Deputy Mayor, Drvar, Bosnia-Herzegovina**

**Faxes: + 387 80 819 170**

**Salutation: Dear Mr Tokma\_ija**

**Vice President of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Vladimir Šolji\_

Musala 9, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina

**Telegrams: Vice President, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina**

**Faxes: + 387 71 472618**

**Salutation: Dear Vice President**

**Deputy Interior Minister of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Jo\_o Leutar

Mehmeda Spahe 7, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina

**Faxes: + 387 71 472976**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:**

**Minister of Refugees and Displaced Persons and Social Welfare**

Rasim Kadi\_

Alipašina 41  
Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina  
**Faxes: + 387 71 615798**

and to diplomatic representatives of Bosnia-Herzegovina accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 29 May 1998.