

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Rape and sexual abuse by armed forces

Introduction

In March 1991 Amnesty International published a report entitled *Women in the front line* outlining the abuse of the human rights of women throughout the world.¹ The report analyzed a number of forms of abuse which fall within Amnesty International's mandate and which women have suffered in a wide range of situations including those occurring within armed conflict. It included a 12-point program to protect women from human rights violations.

¹ Amnesty International, *Women in the front line*, AI Index: ACT 77/01/91, March 1991.

Since the publication of the above report the armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia (particularly the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina) have provided another environment in which the suffering has included gross abuses of human rights on a massive scale. In many cases, such as those of deliberate and arbitrary killing, arbitrary detention and torture and ill-treatment, women have featured alongside men as victims. Many such cases were reported in the Amnesty International report *Bosnia-Herzegovina: Gross abuses of human rights*.² However, the current document seeks to illustrate some cases where women have been subjected to special forms of human rights abuses which they face primarily because of their sex. Rape and sexual abuse feature in particular. Rape constitutes an especially humiliating assault. Consequently, it often carries traumatic social repercussions, which may be affected by a woman's cultural origins or social status. Such factors may affect her ability to bear the trauma of rape, let alone the time it may take for her to come to terms with the emotional distress and physical effects of rape.³ Reliable information is particularly difficult to obtain about such cases as the victims are frequently reluctant to report the incidents or give details, even after reaching places where they are safe from similar abuses. Some women, it seems, feel they must obliterate the experience from their memory; others feel degraded and ashamed or

² Amnesty International, *Bosnia-Herzegovina: Gross abuses of human rights*, AI Index: EUR 63/01/92, October 1992.

³ *Women in the front line*, p18.

fear that they would suffer social stigma should they disclose what has been done to them.⁴ People working with the victims in former Yugoslavia have expressed concern that pressure to give statements or press interviews has increased the stress for those who have already survived immeasurable distress. In all the cases documented in the current report the names of the victims who gave information are known to Amnesty International, but most have been withheld, mainly at the victim's request.

According to some reports or allegations of rape, the victims were later killed. Since few corpses are subject to autopsies in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it is probable that much evidence of rape or sexual abuse as well as of torture and deliberate and arbitrary killing is hidden or lost.

International standards

Rape and sexual abuse as forms of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment are clearly in contravention of international human rights standards, as well as of international humanitarian law, which apply in the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina. A state of war is no justification for the suspension of such standards.

⁴ *ibid*

In time of war, peace-time human rights standards such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment are reinforced by further international humanitarian law standards such as the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Paragraph 1 of Common Article 3 which appears in all four Geneva Conventions of 1949 requires that "in all circumstances" persons taking no active part in the hostilities (including combatants who have laid down their arms or who have been placed *hors de combat* shall be "treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria". The article then prohibits certain acts "at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to the above mentioned persons", including:

"...a) violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture;

b) taking of hostages;

c) outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment..."

On 22 May 1992 representatives of four parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina signed an agreement at the invitation of the

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in which, among other things, they agreed to be bound by Common Article 3.

Other standards of international humanitarian law, such as both the 1977 Protocols to the Geneva Conventions, explicitly prohibit at any time and in any place whatsoever rape, enforced prostitution and any form of indecent assault.

Background

For information on the background to the armed conflicts in former Yugoslavia and for information on Amnesty International's other concerns please see the documents: *Yugoslavia: Torture and deliberate and arbitrary killings in war zones* (November 1991, AI Index: EUR 48/26/91), *Yugoslavia: Further reports of torture and deliberate and arbitrary killings in war zones* (March 1992, AI Index: EUR 48/13/92) and *Bosnia-Herzegovina: Gross Abuses of Human Rights* (October 1992, AI Index: EUR 63/01/92).

The conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Reports indicate that abuses against women, such as rape, have been widespread in the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, that all sides have committed these abuses, but that Muslim women have been the chief victims and the main perpetrators have been members of Serbian

armed forces. Various factors, however, make it difficult to assess the full extent of the abuses to which women in Bosnia-Herzegovina have been subjected.

Some of the difficulties in researching and confirming information on the rape and sexual abuse of women have already been referred to in the introduction, of which perhaps the most important is the shame and social stigma which discourage many women from speaking of the abuses they have suffered. In addition, the administrative chaos that has accompanied armed conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina has rendered almost impossible the systematic collection of data, other than in a few centres. The temporary nature of some of the places used for detaining women has also made it difficult for international bodies seeking to monitor them. Further difficulties arise from the fact that the issue of the rape of women (and of other atrocities committed in the conflict) has been widely used as a propaganda weapon, with all sides minimizing or denying the abuses committed by their own forces and maximizing those of their opponents. Amnesty International considers, therefore, that all estimates as to the number of women who have suffered rape or sexual abuse must be treated with caution.

Although much more information is necessary to complete the picture and information is not available to confirm many of the allegations which have been made, Amnesty International believes that the rape and sexual abuse of women, the great majority of them

Muslims, by Serbian forces has occurred in many places in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in some cases has been carried out in an organized or systematic way, with the deliberate detention of women for the purpose of rape and sexual abuse. Such incidents would seem to fit into the wider pattern of warfare, involving intimidation and abuses against Muslims and Croats which have lead thousands to flee or to be compliant when expelled from their home areas out of fear of further violations. Whether rape has been explicitly singled out by political and military leaders as a weapon against their opponents remains open to question. What is clear is that so far effective measures have rarely, if ever, been taken against such abuses, and that in practice local political and military officers must have had knowledge of, and generally condoned, the rape and sexual abuse of women, together with the other gross abuses which have so frequently accompanied the armed conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, including the deliberate and arbitrary killing of civilians and the torture and ill-treatment of detainees.

Such abuses, including the sexual abuse of women, have been committed by all sides to the conflict. Amnesty International is concerned that Muslim and Croatian armed forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina have also raped and sexually abused women, although on a much lesser scale.

Amnesty International has identified several situations in which it believes rape, attempted rape or sexual abuse have occurred or may still occur in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

1. Where military personnel, policemen, paramilitaries or those in authority, either as individuals or as groups, use their strength and position of authority to take advantage of women in the areas over which they have short- or long-term control. The perpetrators may exploit the vulnerability of women of the subjugated nationalities whose husbands or male relatives are often absent (in some cases in detention). Sometimes the women may be temporarily abducted or otherwise the abuses are carried out on the spot. The perpetrators frequently act with impunity and victims may be even more fearful than usual of reporting the incidents due to the climate of fear resulting from other incidents occurring in the area and the fact that the police forces are usually composed of the controlling nationality.
2. In places of detention where women are held, although not specifically for rape or sexual abuse.
3. In detention centres which appear to have been organized solely or mainly for the rape or sexual abuse of women.

In almost all reported or alleged cases the victims are of different nationality from the perpetrator, that is, women have been singled out for humiliation on account of their nationality and sometimes as a form of retribution because of the perpetrators' presumptions of the actions or intentions of the women's male relatives. The humiliation is

often reinforced by carrying out the acts in front of others, sometimes including male relatives of the victims. In many cases the perpetrators have been able to act with impunity or to use threats against the victims to discourage them from reporting the acts. Along with the element of humiliation the male perpetrators have taken advantage of their victims to satisfy their own sexual desires, sometimes with the apparent encouragement of their commanders.

The cases detailed in this document come from interviews conducted by Amnesty International and by journalists, women's and human rights groups working in the region. The individual cases reported here represent only a small part of the number of alleged cases, but Amnesty International believes that these cases are substantial and illustrate at least part of what has occurred.

It should also be mentioned that Amnesty International has received allegations of instances of male prisoners in detention under the control of both Serbian and Bosnian Government forces being made to perform sexual acts with each other. However, these reports are few in comparison with the numerous reports and allegations of rape or sexual abuse of women.

Amnesty International's recommendations

Amnesty International repeats its appeals to all sides to respect human rights law and humanitarian law and its other earlier

recommendations including those addressed to the international community.⁵ As regards its concerns about the existence of places of detention which may in effect be brothels, the organization emphasizes that military and political leaders are responsible for the conduct of the forces they command and for bringing perpetrators of abuses to account. All parties should be active in uncovering the existence of undeclared places of detention and closing them in cooperation with international bodies.

Amnesty International recommends that the international community offers established expertise or resources in the field of information-gathering and counselling of rape victims either through inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies working in the region or through support for local initiatives. However, the organization considers that the wishes of the victims should in all cases be foremost and that where self-help initiatives exist among the communities of refugees and displaced persons they should be respected.

Details of cases

Rape carried out on the spot or with abduction

Bosanski Petrovac

⁵ *Bosnia-Herzegovina: Gross abuses of human rights*, pp44-46.

A Muslim woman in her thirties from the town of Bosanski Petrovac was raped in a nearby village in turn by two Serbs from the town who were wearing army uniforms. She believes two girls, one aged 14 the other 15 or 16 years, were raped by the same men together with a third man.

The victim, together with her husband, gave a video-taped statement to a human rights group working in the Bosnian Government-controlled town of Zenica. An Amnesty International delegation received a copy of the video tape. According to the statement, one morning in early September 1992 the woman was in a field together with her husband, her young son, and several other people, including two teenage girls, from the village where she had been staying at her mother's house. A group of Serbs in camouflage uniforms came upon the group of Muslims and two of them took her husband and the only other adult male into the nearby forest. They were held there for several hours and were bound with chains, beaten and burnt with cigarettes.

While her husband was in the woods the two teenage girls were taken into a nearby house, one by one, by each of the three remaining Serbs in turn while the other two kept guard. The other Muslims were made to remain in the field. From the appearance of the girls as they emerged and the comments of the Serbs, she concluded that they had been raped. One of the Serbs then took her into a room inside the house and ordered her to undress. She at first refused, feeling further

distress and humiliation because she was having her period. He stripped her at knife-point, asked her to say whether her husband had weapons, threatening that he would kill her if she denied it, and raped her. She was then raped by another of the three. The third threatened to rape her but did not carry out his threat, seeing that she was menstruating. She was then released and was able to find her husband.

Kotor Varoš

A 27-year-old Muslim woman interviewed by Amnesty International in Zenica stated that she had been raped by an officer in the Bosnian-Serb army in a house in the town. In June Serbian forces sought to take full control of the town where local armed Muslims had been resisting from parts of the town and surrounding area. The victim's husband had been detained by Serbian forces but had managed to escape. After her husband's escape the victim was detained and questioned about her husband for three days in the corridor of a local school where men were being detained, beaten and interrogated.

In late July the victim was taken by uniformed Serbs to a private house in the town. She thought she was to be interrogated and begged not leave her children. She believed the house to be under the control of a local Serbian officer. Inside the officer hit, bit and raped her, keeping an automatic weapon close at hand throughout. She was released after two or three hours. During and after the incident the

perpetrator warned her not to let anybody know where she had been or what had happened. He repeated his threats when she was taken again to the house two and a half weeks later.

A second Muslim woman, whose husband had been detained, stated that the same officer attempted to rape her in similar circumstances, but was interrupted by a caller at the house.

Klju_

Several Muslim women from the town of Klju_ interviewed by Amnesty International gave accounts of incidents of rape in the town. Some of these relate to allegations of rape by Serbian reservists and paramilitaries in May and June 1992. Two women stated that they had been raped in early October. One of these, a woman in her twenties, was raped in her house by three drunk, uniformed men whom she knew. Her six-year-old daughter was locked in another house while the rape took place. The other woman, in her mid-sixties, was among a group of eight raped in front of the house they were sheltering in by a group she described as Serbian irregulars whom she knew. Three of them raped her, one first forced his hand into her vagina at knife-point and then made her lick her own blood. Two of the women had their throats slit after the rapes.

Novi Grad

A BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) radio reporter interviewed three Serbian women who were raped in the area around Novi Grad in June. A journalist with the *British Guardian* also spoke with them (published on 17 August 1992).

In June 1992 a group of Serbian women were sheltering in a house in Novi Grad, owned by one of them, S. In most cases their husbands had previously been detained by Croatian forces. L, aged 37, and three other women were abducted from this house and taken to another nearby house by Croatian neighbours who had previously accused them of hiding Serbian fighters. According to L, 15 men, calling themselves *Vatreni Konji* ("Fire horses") were waiting for them there. They reportedly told the women that they were to be raped because *_etniks* had raped 150 women (presumably Croats).⁶ Seven men (all neighbours according to L) raped the women in the course of five hours.

The following night 37-year-old S, in whose house the Serbian women had taken shelter, was taken away from her house in a van by men who claimed to be police. The men then drove to other houses seeking more women and found a 45-year-old woman in another

⁶ *_etniks* were royalist, anti-communist Serbian guerillas during the Second World War. Today some Serbian paramilitary groups have revived the title, but the term is most often used pejoratively by Croats and Muslims to refer to Serbian fighters.

house. At one point Croatian military police officers tried to intervene when they heard the women screaming in the van, but failed when their captors shot at them and drove off in the van. S and the other woman were driven to a wood and there beaten and raped in the back of the van. Both women were later abandoned naked and left to find their own way home.

A third woman, 36-year-old G, stated that on the evening of 24 June 1992 a group of drunken men took her away at gunpoint from the house in which she was sheltering with her 16-year-old son; three of them raped her in an empty house nearby. They tried to force her to shout that she was enjoying it; when she repeatedly refused one man grabbed her hair and banged her head against the floor. G did not recognize the men, but they too referred to themselves as *Vatreni konji*. She reported the incident to the police in the town. After an initially sympathetic response she was accused of possessing arms and a radio receiver and detained for two days in a corn-store.

(Other Serbian sources also refer to rapes having been carried out in Novi Grad by a group of young men from Posavska Mahala and surrounding villages, referring to themselves as *Vatreni konji*.)

Bosanski Brod

The Belgrade newspaper *Borba* in a report of 13 November 1992 referred to a video-taped statement given by a Muslim prisoner, AS, in which he reportedly admitted to having participated in killings of

Serbian civilians in villages around Bosanski Brod and in the rape and abduction of young women, mainly Serbs, but also Muslims. He described an attack on the village of Sijekovac in late March 1992 during which he and three other Muslim men raped a young woman and her mother, then killed both parents of the young woman before abducting her in a car. He believed that a total of about 28 Serbian women were abducted from Sijekovac during this raid and said that one of his companions had told him that they were taken to Slavonski Brod where they were detained in brothels for the use of members of the Croatian Army.⁷ He stated that he and his three companions had also abducted three Muslim girls and a Serbian girl and taken them to their homes. He had held one of the girls, a Muslim, in his home for three or four days, and forced her to have intercourse with him after threatening to kill her.

Rape in detention

Trnopolje and Omarska

Many people detained by Bosnian Serbian forces in the camp at Trnopolje have alleged that women were taken out from their sleeping quarters and were raped. Although Amnesty International has not been able to confirm specific incidents of rape with victims or eye-witnesses, the frequent reports of guards or Serbian soldiers from

⁷ See page 13 for allegations of earlier events in this area.

outside coming and looking for and taking away women indicate strongly that rapes were taking place.

There are also reports that a group of women were held by Bosnian Serbian forces in the Omarska camp and allegations that rapes took place there.

Dretelj

In a statement dated 27 August 1992 given to a member of the Orthodox clergy of the Ostrog Monastery, OS, a Serbian woman from the town of Capljina, stated that she was arrested by members of HOS (Croatian Defence Forces), a Croatian paramilitary organization, in May 1992. She was detained until 18 August 1992 at Dretelj, described as a military fuel storage facility, together with some 60 other women and 110 men. In her statement describing the ill-treatment of prisoners, she alleged that several women, including elderly women, were raped at the camp.

Detention for the purpose of rape

Caparde

According to interviews with some of the victims by a journalist working for the US New York daily newspaper *Newsday*, 40 young Muslim women were systematically raped by Serbian forces in the town of Caparde in northern Bosnia in June 1992.

On 17 June about 1,000 women, children and old people were taken away by Serbian forces from their home village of Brezovo Polje by bus. Travelling without food or water, they arrived in the town of Caparde several days later. In the course of the journey some women and girls were taken by Serbian soldiers from the buses while they were parked in the village of Ban Brdo for several nights and were returned with blood stains and torn clothes.

At Caparde the older women were separated, reportedly by paramilitaries from the group controlled by eljko Ra_natovi_ (commonly known as Arkan), and were taken by bus to the battle-lines which they then had to cross on foot. The younger women were held for several nights in a furniture warehouse in the town. Serbian soldiers selected and raped 40 of the women between the ages of 15 and 30 years. One girl who survived the experience said that the man who raped her told her that they had been selected as the "prettiest and most attractive". Another victim told the journalist that in her case the perpetrator threatened her with a hand grenade and tried to justify his actions by saying that other paramilitaries, followers of the Serbian Radical Party leader, Vojislav Šešelj, would have raped them "10 men to one woman".

The young women rejoined the older women (many of them their mothers) four days later after being forced to pass along a mined road. Doctors who received them in the Bosnian

Government-controlled town of Tuzla following their release reportedly said that some of the girls were pregnant.

Višegrad

In interviews carried out by a German freelance journalist rape victims reported the existence of a brothel used by Serbian paramilitaries in the hotel *Vilina Vlas*, about seven kilometres from Višegrad, where Muslim women have been held or taken.

One 17-year-old girl from Višegrad who was taken there to be raped in early June and who was returned to her home the following day identified the perpetrator as a Višegrad man living in Belgrade, whom she believed, by the badges he wore, to be a member of the Serbian paramilitary group *Beli Orlovi*. She was taken, together with her younger sister and a friend, to the hotel *Vilina Vlas* where they were made to go into separate rooms, each with a soldier. The soldier who had taken the girl first questioned her about the whereabouts of her father and whether she knew anything about weapons hidden in Višegrad and then raped her. Meanwhile she heard screams and she recognized her sister's voice outside. The next morning the same man took her home in his car, but her sister and her friend were kept behind. Her mother went to inquire about her daughter at the police station every day but police officers told her they could not do anything about it. They admitted that they knew what was going on in the hotel but maintained that the situation was not in their

control. The girl alleged that dozens of women and girls were taken off to the hotel; most of them did not return.

Another woman was taken to a large fire station in Višegrad where she was held for five days at the end of May. She was repeatedly raped in the station by Serbian paramilitaries belonging to Arkan's and Šešelji's units. She was apparently targeted because the soldiers suspected her of hiding arms and helping the Bosnian Territorial Defence. On the fourth day of her detention she was taken by one paramilitary commander to the hotel *Vilina Vlas* and raped by him and another eight men. They returned her to the fire station after midnight the same day. She stated that she saw many more women and girls in the hotel - as the doors of some of the rooms were open she could see some of them being raped.

Sarajevo - Vogošća hotel

A 21-year-old soldier in the Bosnian-Serb army who was captured by Bosnian Government forces in November 1992, while being questioned by Bosnian Government investigators reportedly confessed to, or stated that he had witnessed, a number of gross human rights abuses. The television station in Sarajevo also transmitted interviews with the man in which he confessed to a range of abuses.

In a report in the *New York Times* of 27 November 1992, a journalist who carried out an extensive interview with the man, wrote that among other abuses the soldier admitted to the rape and murder

of eight young Muslim women in or around the *Sonja* motel at *Vogošća*, north of Sarajevo. The soldier said that the paramilitary commander controlling the premises encouraged him and other Serbian soldiers to take the Muslim women who were held at the motel and not to return them. The bodies of the murdered women were sometimes hidden from Serbian military police; on other occasions they were left by the roadside.

Tesli_

In an interview with a Zagreb doctor a 17-year-old Muslim girl from the village of Kaloševi_i near Tesli_ stated that Serbs in JNA (Yugoslav People's Army - *Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija*) uniforms took her and other women from the village in late April to an unknown location, apparently some sort of workers' huts, in woods near the town. She was held there for three months until released with 12 other women by a local Serb, who was apparently unconnected with the camp and who acted on his own initiative. Twenty-four women were held in her hut, although she believes she saw about 100 women in total as they were unloaded. She and others were beaten upon arrival and on later occasions. Twelve women, including the informant, who were held in her room were raped in the room in front of the other women on multiple occasions, sometimes by more than one man at a time. Other women who tried to defend her on one occasion were beaten and one of the perpetrators told her, "You will bear a Serbian child". Some of the women had their hands tied while they were raped.

Sarajevo

There have been a number of allegations that Bosnian Government forces have detained Serbian women for rape and sexual abuse in various locations in Sarajevo: among such locations cited as having been used at one time or another for such purposes have been a student hostel "Mladen Stojanovi_" in Radi_eva street, premises in

Danila Ozme street (the latter said to have been closed at the end of August 1992) and premises in the Alipashino Polje and Cengi_Vila quarters of Sarajevo.

The conflict in Croatia

Although the scale of abuses against women has been undoubtedly much greater in the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, three cases which occurred during the conflict in Croatia in 1991 and subsequently in early 1992, and which have only recently come to light, serve to illustrate that the concerns existed in the earlier conflict.

Begejci and Belgrade

In November and December 1991, a Croatian woman in her late thirties serving in the Croatian National Guard was forced to perform sexual acts in two places of detention by a single guard in each case. The victim was interviewed by Amnesty International in December 1992 after being released in August 1992.

The victim was captured in a village near Vukovar on 25 October 1991. Between 1 November and 14 December 1991 she was held in a prison camp at Begejci. She believes that there were only five other women, all civilians, among the 460 people detained there. She was not allowed to talk to the other women. At some point a number of Serbian reservists arrived, apparently as guards. One of them took her

to his sleeping quarters regularly throughout a two-week period. The soldier forced her to perform oral sex with him saying that he did not want full intercourse with an "ustaša".⁸ She did not dare tell the officer who interrogated her, whom she stated behaved correctly, or other prisoners of what was happening.

The woman was then transferred to the military prison in Belgrade where for the first few weeks another individual guard also forced her to have oral sex with him and also beat and sexually assaulted her. Again the victim was too scared to tell anybody about it, not even after it stopped when she was transferred to a cell with a female Serbian prisoner. A female doctor who checked her weekly apparently looked only at her back, missing injuries which she says she sustained as he beat her on the breasts. She had wanted to speak to the prison governor alone but could not find an occasion when she was out of earshot of guards whom she feared would inform the perpetrator.

Vukovar

A 50-year-old Croat woman from the village of Berak near Vukovar, who was interviewed by a doctor in Zagreb, was raped by Serbian

⁸ The *Ustaša* was the name of the movement behind the regime which, with German and Italian support, ruled Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina during the Second World War. Today it is mostly used by Serbs as a pejorative term for Croats, soldiers in particular.

paramilitaries in a neighbour's house in November 1991. She may have been singled out because the perpetrators believed her son to have organized resistance.

Early in September 1991 there was a heavy JNA presence in the village. Many of the local men wore army uniforms and later those of the so-called "Serbian Autonomous Region of the Krajina". One of the victim's sons was arrested by these local Serbs. Immediately after his arrest she was questioned by local uniformed Serbs in the village and was shown a statement in which her son admitted to possessing a radio transmitter and a hunting rifle. She was also told that her son had been handed over to the JNA. The family house was searched and the transmitter and rifle were removed. The JNA again reappeared in the village in early October when most of the remaining non-Serb population was rounded-up and held in a fertilizer store and later in a private house. The men were systematically interrogated and many were beaten. Many men disappeared from the camp: some may have been extrajudicially executed.

The woman was allowed to return home on 16 December without her husband. She found that her home had been looted and that Serbian paramilitaries from outside Croatia, members of the *Beli Orlovi* ("White Eagles"), had moved into a neighbouring house. She was told by a visiting JNA officer together with a local, that she must leave the village because her son had been an "organizer". The next day, she was taken to a neighbouring house where she was blindfolded and then to what she believes was a *Beli Orlovi* house. There she

reports that she was immediately stripped naked and in the course of about two hours was raped and made to perform oral sex with seven men. Her son was mentioned as she was sworn at. A knife was held to her breasts and finally some of her clothing was stuffed into her mouth almost choking her. After dressing they fired at her from an automatic weapon as they chased her away from the house. With the aid of a female Serbian neighbour she reached a military casualty unit where a sympathetic doctor attended to her. She saw senior JNA officers at the casualty unit but remained too scared to report the incident to them, believing that they had organized or condoned it.

Slavonski Brod

A 28-year-old Serbian nurse from Brčko in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in a statement published in the Belgrade newspaper *Borba* on 16 November 1992 claimed that she had been detained, raped and ill-treated by Croatian forces in Slavonski Brod. She repeated the testimony to a journalist writing for the German magazine *Der Spiegel* (issue 53/92, December 1992).

On 26 January 1992 the nurse was returning to Brčko after a visit to Germany. Croatian police stopped the bus near Sisak in Croatia. The passengers' passports were checked and four women and two men, apparently of Serbian nationality, were taken to Sisak. She was then taken with some others to a detention camp in an oil refinery at Slavonski Brod on the border with Bosnia-Herzegovina. She stated that she was repeatedly raped together with other women

held there, frequently by men who had returned from the front. In April (she was pregnant by this time) she was transferred to a detention centre in a school in Odak in Bosnia-Herzegovina which she stated was run by Croats and Muslims. She does not state that she was further ill-treated and when Croatian paramilitaries came she was able to buy her way out with foreign currency she had hidden in her clothing.⁹

⁹ See page 8 for allegations of later incidents in this area of Croatia and the area of Bosnia-Herzegovina which borders it.