

AI Index: EUR 63/10/93

EXTERNAL

7 April 1993

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Dragan IJIC, (aged 65), a retired businessman, is an ethnic Serb from the town of Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina. On the night of 1 March 1993, three uniformed men, armed with machine guns and grenades, reportedly rang at the door of the flat he was living in with his wife. According to his wife the men were wearing uniforms of the "Croatian army"¹. As it was after the local curfew imposed on Mostar citizens by the local Croatian authorities, the couple did not want to let them in. The men then reportedly broke into the flat and seized Dragan IJIC and drove him away. One of the soldiers reportedly threatened Mrs IJIC that if she did not accompany them, she would not see her husband again. The next day Mrs IJIC reported the incident to the local police and was told to stay in her flat.

The couple had reportedly been earlier threatened by a neighbour (possibly a member of the HVO) who apparently wanted them to exchange their flat for his which was smaller.

There have been subsequent reports that Dragan IJIC was held at the detention camp of Jasenica, a small town near Mostar, under the control of the HVO. However these reports have to date not been confirmed.

Amnesty International's concern: Amnesty International is concerned that

Dragan IJIC, a Serb, has been abducted either by the Croatian army, operating in Bosnia, or by the Croatian Defence Council (local armed forces operating under the leader of the Bosnian Croats, Mate Boban). The available information indicates that one of the reasons for his abduction may have been his ethnic origin.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mostar lies in the south of Bosnia-Herzegovina and is the second-largest town of the republic. Before the outbreak of civil conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina it had a mixed population of which Croats and Muslims each made up roughly 40 per cent, and Serbs the remaining 20 per cent. Mostar is also the main town of an area controlled by forces under the command of Mate Boban, the leader of the Bosnian Croats, who refers to this area as the "Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna" (Hrvatska Zajednica Herceg-Bosne). Under the Vance-Owen peace plan proposed for Bosnia-Herzegovina Mostar province would be one of the three provinces under Croatian control.

¹It is not entirely clear whether they were soldiers of the Bosnian Croatian army, known as the Croatian Defense Forces (HVO) or whether they were soldiers of the army of the Republic of Croatia (HV).

The town has been under siege from Serbian paramilitary forces since April last year, with local forces, consisting mainly of poorly armed Croats and Muslims, defending it. In May they received assistance from the better equipped armed forces of the HVO, commanded by Mate Boban who promised to support them on the condition that all fighters would place themselves under his command. The town's defenders consented to this but since then there have been complaints that the HVO has repeatedly blocked the delivery of weapons and emergency relief to Muslims, and that while Serbian forces were threatening the town from the outside², from June 1992 onwards, inside the town there were incidents of repression of the non-Croatian population carried out by the HVO.

Amnesty International has received various reports of house-eviction and forcible expulsion of Serbian civilians in Mostar and its surroundings. In most cases these were reportedly carried out by local Croatian military police or by members of the HVO.

²For more information on human rights abuses committed by Serbian forces around Mostar, please see "*Bosnia-Herzegovina : Gross Abuses of Basic Human Rights*", AI Index EUR 63/01/92, page 34-35.