

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: EUR 63/1263/2015  
20 March 2015

**Amnesty International calls on Bosnia and Herzegovina to ensure access to justice for war crimes, including for victims of sexual violence, and provide adequate witness protection**

***Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Bosnia and Herzegovina***

Bosnia and Herzegovina has taken positive steps towards increasing the resources available for the prosecution of war crimes. The authorities must now ensure that the large backlog of cases before the courts and at the investigative stage is reduced. They must also launch new investigations and prosecutions, providing access to justice for the many victims whose cases have never been heard.

Amnesty International is concerned that survivors of sexual violence committed during the conflict face obstacles in accessing their right to reparation, particularly in Republika Srpska where access has been effectively denied since the end of 2007. Many are stigmatized and ostracised. Even when the courts had established that a war crime had been committed involving sexual violence, compensation has not been awarded to the victims. In many cases the only remedy available is a disability allowance. However, to access this, victims face considerable administrative hurdles.

We call on the government to ensure that victims of war crimes of sexual violence have effective access to reparation, including appropriate healthcare services for physical and psychological conditions and reintegration into society. The government must guarantee comprehensive rehabilitation to all victims, regardless of where they live in the country, and ensure they do not face discrimination on the grounds of their gender or national identity.

Finally, Amnesty International calls on the government to ensure witness protection so that witnesses are able to testify in court. These measures must be tailored to individual needs and be available before, during and after the court procedure, with sufficient safeguards such as identity protection and psychological support.

### **Background**

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 20 March 2015 during its 28<sup>th</sup> session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above. Amnesty International had earlier submitted information on the situation of human rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur63/003/2014/en/>

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