

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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NOTE TO COORDINATORS: *This appeal is being sent out by e-mail/telex/fax only because it is felt that the situation may change rapidly.*

EXTRA 74/91

ARREST AND ILL-TREATMENT

5 November 1991

YUGOSLAVIA: Father Josip Bogovi_, parish priest of Dre_nik and Vaganac

Marko Kne_evi_) all
Mile Kne_evic) from
Nikola Nikoli_) Vaganac

Mile Luka_) hearse drivers
Jure Magdi_) from Slunj

Dra_en Renduli_ from Rakovice.

Also: Father Mile Peci_, parish priest and deacon of Slunj
Sisters (nuns) Amalija and Mihaela from Dre_nik and Vaganac
(these three have been released).

Amnesty International is concerned about reports of the detention and ill-treatment in Titova Korenica of Father Josip Bogovi_ and six other men by Serbian paramilitary forces.

The above persons are Croatians from an area close to the border with Bosnia-Hercegovina. According to information received by Amnesty International, on 14 October 1991, Father Mile Peci_ requested the military commander of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) garrison in the town of Slunj for a military escort to the village of Vaganac, in order to identify and give a religious burial to about 10 elderly people there who were believed to have died when the village was burned during fighting.

This request was accepted and the next day Father Peci_, together with another priest, two nuns, two hearse-drivers and four local men, left for Vaganac in three vehicles under military escort, having previously accepted the condition set by the military that they should not bring with them weapons, cameras, or video-cameras. The officer in charge of the military escort reportedly guaranteed them safe passage.

On arrival in Vaganac, they found the village burned and were unable to identify or bury the dead. On their way back on the following day, at about 5.30pm in the town of Prijeboj their military escort handed them over to a group of armed Serbian paramilitaries (locally referred to as armed members of the (self-proclaimed) Serbian Autonomous District of Krajina - SAO Krajina), who took them to the town of Titova Korenica. There they were taken into the basement of the police station where they were beaten and otherwise physically ill-treated until late in the night.

The next morning (16 October 1991), Father Peci_ and the two nuns were allowed to return home, although their car was taken from them. Father Peci_ was obliged to seek treatment at a hospital in Rijeka, where he stayed from 22 to 24 October. A medical certificate dated 24 October, issued by the hospital, of which Amnesty International has a copy, states that as a result of the ill-treatment which Father Peci_ received in Titova Korenica, he bore "*traces of blows all over his body and limbs, particularly on the left side of his chest where there is subcutaneous bruising*".

The fate of the seven men who remained detained was still unknown to local church authorities on 4 November 1991.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since the outbreak of armed conflict in Croatia in July 1991, there have been reports of extrajudicial executions and killings in Croatia and in border areas, carried out against captured civilians or members of armed forces by all parties to the conflict. There have also been reports of the torture and ill-treatment of people detained in connection with the fighting. Victims have included Croats, Serbs and other nationalities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/faxes:

- expressing concern about reports that on 15 October 1991 a group of 10 people, including two priests (give names), were beaten and otherwise ill-treated in a police station in Titova Korenica by armed members of the SAO Krajina in Titova Korenica;
- stating that it is reported that a JNA military escort from Slunj garrison handed over the group to the armed members of the SAO Krajina, despite having previously guaranteed them safe passage to the village of Vaganac for the purpose of burying the dead;
- asking for information about the present situation of the seven people (give names) who reportedly remain detained and urge that if they are not already at liberty they be immediately released.
- noting that Yugoslavia is a signatory to the Geneva Convention of 1949, which explicitly stipulates that in the case of armed conflict civilians and members of armed forces who have laid down their arms should be treated humanely.
- noting also that Yugoslavia in September 1991 ratified the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or punishment.

APPEALS TO

1.
(JNA General Andrija Raseta
of 5th Military District):
 General Andrija Rašeta **Dear General**
 Komanda V Vojne Oblasti
 Zagreb
 Croatia, Yugoslavia
Telegrams: same address

Telegrams: Savezni sekretar za narodnu
odbranu Kadijevic, Belgrade, Yugoslavia
Faxes: + 38 11 636 775

2.
(Federal Secretary for National Defence):
 General Veljko Kadijevi_ **Dear General**
 Savezni sekretar za narodnu odbranu
 Kneza Milosa 35
 Belgrade, Yugoslavia

3.

(President of Serbia):

Mr Slobodan Milosevic **Dear President**

Predsednik Republike Srbije

Marsala Tita 14

Belgrade, Yugoslavia

Telegrams: Predsednik Republike Srbije

Milosevic,

Belgrade, Yugoslavia

Faxes: + 38 11 682 167

COPIES TO:

Dr Anton Tamarut

Archbishop of Rijeka-Senj

Vajnerova 2

51000 Rijeka

Croatia, Yugoslavia

and to diplomatic representatives of Yugoslavia in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 13 December 1991.