

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on UA 39/94 (EUR 63/03/94, 4 February 1994) - Deliberate and arbitrary killings / fear for safety

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: Shelling of civilians - New atrocity and update on incident of 4 February 1994

On 5 February, at the busiest time of the day, a single mortar shell fell on the market off Maršal Tito street in the centre of Sarajevo. Sixty eight people were reported killed and nearly 200 injured. Almost all the victims appear to have been civilians. This new atrocity is the worst single massacre since the siege of Sarajevo took hold in April 1992.

United Nations Military monitors are reported to have concluded that the three shells which fell on an aid queue in the Dobrinja suburb of Sarajevo on 4 February were fired from Bosnian Serb mortars in Lukavica, about four kilometres distant.

About 26 people are reported to have been wounded in addition to the six adults and three children who were killed. Most or all appear to be civilians. The Bosnian Serb authorities have denied responsibility for the incident, but the available information indicates that in both cases the deaths and injuries were perpetrated by Bosnian Serb forces.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Bosnian Serb authorities have repeatedly denied responsibility for such incidents and claimed that they have been staged by the Bosnian Government or Muslim forces in the city. Bosnian Serb artillery has been in place around Sarajevo for nearly two years. This artillery is largely positioned on hills with good visibility and the possibility of developing accurate range-finding over this long period. The Bosnian Serb guns have regularly bombarded the Bosnian Government held parts of the town throughout this period with only occasional periods of respite. Much smaller amounts of outgoing fire have come from the artillery controlled by the Bosnian Government forces.

There has not usually been independent analysis to confirm the origin of the shells in individual incidents, but it is clear that the Bosnian Serb artillery has deliberately targeted civilians on many occasions. Places where civilians congregate -- food or water queues, for example -- have been hit on several occasions resulting in horrific casualties. Hospitals, schools and cemeteries have also been hit. Until now, the worst such incidents occurred in May and June 1992 when on two occasions mortar bombs falling on city centre streets resulted in around 20 deaths in each incident. Such incidents, sometimes involving up to 10 civilian deaths, have been in addition to numerous incidents in which one or two civilians have been killed or wounded after shells fell on or near civilian targets.

International humanitarian law is unequivocal in stating that in an armed conflict, people who take no active part in the hostilities must be distinguished from those who do. People who are uninvolved in a conflict, including most civilians, must be distinguished from military personnel and others who are directly involved and able to influence the course of the conflict. This principle is directly derived from the protection of the individual enshrined in Article 3 common to the four Geneva conventions of 1949.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters in English/French/German or your own language

- condemning the latest incidents in which nine civilians queuing for humanitarian aid were killed by Bosnian Serb artillery in the Dobrinja district of Sarajevo on 4 February 1994 and 68 more people were killed in the market off Maršal Tito street on 5 February;
- noting that on many previous occasions Bosnian Serb artillery has deliberately targeted civilians;
- stating that international humanitarian law requires the military to distinguish civilians from combatants;
- calling for the chain of command to be strengthened to ensure that such incidents are not allowed to reoccur;
- calling for an immediate and thorough investigation of the latest incidents and for those suspected of ordering or perpetrating the incidents to be brought to justice;
- stressing that Amnesty International is concerned for victims of all national groups and continues to appeal to all sides in the conflict.

APPEALS TO:

1) President of the Republic of Serbia:

Slobodan Milošević
 Predsednik Republike Srbije
 Andrijev venac 1
 11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia
Telegrams: President Milošević, Beograd, Yugoslavia
Faxes: + 381 11 682 167
Salutation: Dear President

2) The Representative of the Bosnian Serbs:

Dr Radovan Karadžić
 Biro Republike Srpske
 Moše Pijade 8
 11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia
Telegrams: Representative of the Bosnian Serbs Karadžić, Beograd, Yugoslavia
Faxes: + 381 11 235 1213
Salutation: Dear Dr Karadžić

3) Commander of Serbian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina:

General Ratko Mladić
 Biro "Republike Srpske"
 Moše Pijade 8
 11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia
Telegrams: Commander of Serbian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mladić, Beograd, Yugoslavia
Faxes: + 381 11 235 1213
Salutation: Dear General Mladić

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Diplomatic representatives of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 March 1994.