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## **Bosnia-Herzegovina: Amnesty International Condemns Unfair Trial of "Zvornik Seven"**

A Bosnian Serb Court today sentenced seven Bosnian Muslims -- the "Zvornik Seven" -- to up to 20 years' imprisonment, following a grossly unfair trial, according to Amnesty International.

Three of the men were sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment and the other four to one year's imprisonment.

"The trial represents a gross failure of the Republika Srpska authorities to live up to the human rights commitments which they agreed to at Dayton-- and of the international community to see those rights respected," Amnesty International said today. "What is more, all the men appear to have been tortured in custody and were denied lawyers of their choice."

The organization is calling for an urgent re-trial with proceedings which meet international standards for fair trials.

The seven men, all Bosniacs (Bosnian Muslims), were tortured or ill-treated following their detention by Bosnian Serb police in the Republika Srpska Entity of Bosnia-Herzegovina in May 1996. During the initial interrogation, when the ill-treatment took place, two of the men reportedly had no access to a lawyer at all. Civilian police monitors of the United Nations International Police Task Force who visited them some days after they had been detained recorded marks on each man's body consistent with ill-treatment, including bruising on all but one of them. The men were charged in July 1996.

After a two-day trial, in which court-appointed defence lawyers reportedly spoke only briefly, the men were convicted and sentenced. Three of the men -- Nedžad Hasić, Ahmo Harbaš and Behudin Husić -- were convicted of the murder of four Serbs on 2 May 1996 and were sentenced today to 20 years' imprisonment. In addition, the three were sentenced to one year's imprisonment for the "illegal possession of arms" as were the four other defendants. Charges against two of the men for the killing of a Muslim were dropped.

The Republika Srpska authorities refused to recognize lawyers from the other Entity, the Bosniac-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The men's defence lawyers from the Federation reportedly refused offers from the Republika Srpska to allow them to "assist" defence lawyers who had been appointed by the authorities.

The men, all from Srebrenica, were originally detained when they surrendered to a patrol of US soldiers from the Implementation Force (IFOR) led by NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) in May 1996. As they were armed, IFOR quickly handed them over to the Republika Srpska police as the Dayton peace agreement dictated.

Amnesty International believes that IFOR should have obtained strict guarantees about their treatment before any such handover. An eighth man who was later detained and released was reportedly not ill-treated.

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