

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

**AI Index: EUR 63/18/94
Distr: UA/SC**

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EXTRA 41/94 Ill-treatment

29 July 1994

**BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA Civilian prisoners detained in Velika Kladuša,
western Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Some 150 civilians, the majority Muslims, have reportedly been detained and many ill-treated in an improvised prison camp in a chicken farm outside the town of Velika Kladuša, in the Muslim-populated enclave of Biha_, western Bosnia-Herzegovina. They are being detained by supporters of a local separatist leader, Fikret Abdi_, a Muslim, who apparently, believe that they, or members of their family, support the Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

On 26 July Tadeusz Mazowiecki, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the former Yugoslavia, who had just returned from a visit to the enclave, stated at a press conference that the 150 civilian prisoners, both men and women, were being held in very poor conditions and many had been beaten. Male detainees were also being made to carry out forced labour. Some of the detainees are reportedly seriously ill or disabled and are not receiving adequate medical care. Most appear to have been detained in the last two weeks of June 1994. Reportedly none had legal documents supporting their prolonged detention, although some had documents ordering their detention in police custody for three days (this period having long since expired), and others had court documents ordering their release, but nonetheless remained detained. Many detainees claimed to have no idea of the reasons for their detention; others reportedly stated that they had been arrested because they were loyal to the Bosnian Government (but had not taken part in the conflict) or had relatives fighting with the Fifth Corps of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Army. Some children who had been detained together with their parents had been earlier released.

The detainees - about 100 men and 50 women held separately - who include manual labourers, farmers, professionals and housewives - are reportedly sleeping on wooden pallets with blankets provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross. There are no toilets or washing facilities inside the building, and in some areas no electric lighting.

Tadeusz Mazowiecki also visited a prison in Government-controlled Biha_ and reportedly found serious human rights violations there (not specified) although no civilians had been detained.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Muslim enclave of Biha_ is surrounded by Bosnian Serb-controlled territory (to the south and east) and by the Krajina region of Croatia (controlled by Croatian Serbs) to the north and west. In September 1993 Fikret Abdi_, a local magnate, declared the enclave's autonomy from Bosnian Government-controlled Bosnia-Herzegovina. This precipitated a conflict inside the enclave between supporters of Fikret Abdi_ and Bosnian Government forces (the Fifth Corps of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Army). Bosnian Government forces are now in control of the towns of Biha_ and Cazin, but not Velika Kladuša.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send Faxes only:

- expressing deep concern about reports that some 150 civilians, men and women, are being detained, without court order, in a chicken farm near Velika Kladuša. Note reports that some of them have been severely ill-treated in detention and that others who are seriously ill or disabled are not receiving adequate medical care;

- urging the immediate and unconditional release of all detainees who have neither used nor advocated violence;

- urging that he ensure an investigation into all complaints of ill-treatment and that any person found to be responsible for ill-treating detainees be brought to justice;

APPEALS TO

Mr Fikret Abdi_
Velika Kladuša
Autonomna Pokrajina Zapadna Bosna
Bosnia Herzegovina
Satellite fax number: +871 11 22 365
Salutation: Dear Mr Abdi_

COPIES TO:

diplomatic representatives of the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina accredited to your country.

Please send appeals immediately. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 26 August 1994.