

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL 11 AUGUST 1995

AI INDEX : EUR 63/19/95

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA:HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES COMMITTED BY BOSNIAN-SERB FORCES AGAINST MUSLIMS DURING THE CAPTURE OF SREBRENICA

A disturbing series of human rights abuses were perpetrated by Bosnian-Serb forces against Muslims attempting to flee the Srebrenica enclave in mid-July, declared the Amnesty International delegation just returned from Tuzla.

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of large numbers of people who are unaccounted for. Many have been taken into detention by the Bosnian Serb forces and international agencies such as the ICRC have only limited access to them.

"Many thousands of men, including boys as young as 12, remain unaccounted for and may have been deliberately or arbitrarily killed," Amnesty International said.

Testimony gathered by Amnesty International from persons evacuated from Srebrenica reinforces estimates that as many as a total of 4,000 men may be missing, of which 1,000 were taken away from the town of Srebrenica and detained. The pattern indicates a deliberate policy on the part of the Bosnian Serb *de facto* authorities to detain all male civilians who stayed in Srebrenica, including young boys and old men.

Amnesty International concludes that there was no widespread policy of abducting women and girls (similar to that of detaining males), according to the information that the human rights organization was able to gather, although some isolated cases give rise to concern.

One effect of the fall of Srebrenica and _epa has been a number of reprisals taken against ethnic Serbs resident in the Tuzla region. Amnesty International has received reports of evictions and beatings and other ill-treatment of ethnic Serbs at the hands of displaced persons from Srebrenica, as well as the death of one man in the village of Jasenice near Srebrenica and an elderly woman in the village of Simin Han near Tuzla..The local police authorities are reported to be investigating this case, but so far no arrest has been made.

The delegation has been able to establish a chronology that shows a disturbing series of abuses.

11 July

Srebrenica occupied by Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) forces. Muslim Bosnian Government Army (AbiH) withdraw on foot through the forest accompanied by an unknown number of male civilians of draft age, a small number of women and children, relatives of prominent local politicians, military officers or others who thought themselves to be at risk. This group of about 15,000 people appears to have been subject to systematic ambushes by Bosnian Serb

soldiers. Reports state that some of the people in the group were killed after surrendering to Serb forces.

The remaining population of Srebrenica, almost entirely civilian, withdrew to a disused factory at Poto_ari. Men of draft age (including some reportedly as young as 12 and some in their seventies) were detained by Bosnian Serb forces when women, children and the elderly were evacuated to Bosnian Government-held territory.

12 July

Bosnian Serb troops enter the area of Poto_ari, and by the end of the day control it.

The first buses carrying displaced persons began to move out that afternoon. As they tried to enter the buses men were separated from the women and detained by the Serbs.

Small groups of Bosnian Serb soldiers reportedly enter the factory in the evening and take away men. The majority of these were men of draft age, although boys as young as 13 are reported to have been among those taken.

One witness, who was outside, reported that a group of BSA soldiers entered the factory buildings and took away Ibran Mustafi_, a leading member of the Party of Democratic Action (*Stranka Demokratske Akcije* - SDA, the main Muslim party) in Srebrenica. She was able to see him, his brother and another elderly relative as they were led away by the soldiers and loaded onto a truck which was driven in the direction of Bratunac, a town which was under Bosnian Serb control.

Many of the people clustered outside the factory spoke of similar abductions. One woman saw her brother-in-law taken away by three soldiers; the soldiers said nothing as they took him away except to tell everyone to stay quiet. She was unable to see where he was taken.

It is unclear what happened to those who were detained, but in some cases witnesses reported that they were taken out of sight into or behind a building, and that the sound of shots followed. There is considerable evidence that at least some of those abducted or detained were killed in the immediate area.

Several witnesses reported that on that night, and the morning of 13 July they saw the bodies of men lying in a field near the factory buildings. They came across the bodies of men in civilian clothing lying in a row. Most reports speak of 10 or 12 bodies, and some witnesses claim that their throats had been cut.

13 July

A group of nine men were reportedly shot in a field near one of the factories following an attempt to escape the area.

Amnesty International confirmed that while people were boarding the buses and lorries men of all ages were separated from the women and children and detained by the Bosnian Serb authorities.

Another woman saw her brother, father, father-in-law and her husband's uncle pushed and kicked as Serb soldiers prevented them from boarding the bus and took them to a nearby building.

One woman reported that after several soldiers, one of whom struck her with the butt of a rifle, had attempted to separate them she was finally allowed to take her mentally retarded 20 year-old son with her onto one of the buses after appealing to a Serb soldier who had been at school with him. This soldier accompanied them to the bus and told the driver not to stop or let anyone take her son off.

One witness claims that 293 of the men who were inside the compound were detained when attempting to board the buses, and estimates that some 600 of those outside were also detained.

Numerous witnesses told of the abduction of young women from the convoys. There are some concerns that isolated cases of rape or sexual abuse may have taken place.

A man told the Amnesty International delegates that when he was evacuated in a medical convoy from Poto_ari to Tiš_a soldiers went to each truck and verbally abused the wounded. A nurse was taken away, and returned some time later, saying that she had been beaten and raped. The Gynaecological Department of Gradina Hospital in Tuzla confirmed that she received medical treatment for rape.

14 July.

Witnesses travelling towards Teš_e in buses also reported sightings of Muslim men being made to walk along the road with their hands clasped behind their heads.

At least one large group of men was held in a clearing in the forest by the side of the road and again made to clasp their hands behind their heads. One woman claims to have seen this group lined up and shot with a machine gun while her bus was stopped.

ENDS\