

## STOP PRESS

News Service 169/97

AI INDEX: EUR 63/23/97  
9 OCTOBER 1997

### **Bosnia-Herzegovina: Surrender of suspects is no reason for international complacency**

The recent transfer of 10 publicly-indicted Bosnian Croats to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (Tribunal) is a welcome step towards bringing to justice those suspected of gross human rights abuses in former Yugoslavia -- but a more rapid process should in the future be enforced, Amnesty International said today.

"It is alarming that it has taken the Croatian and Bosnian-Croat authorities almost two years to bring about this development -- and not without substantial international pressure," the organization said as it released a report today describing some of these crimes and others featured in additional Tribunal indictments.

The 10 men, who were transferred on 3 October, were accused of crimes including attacks on villages within a 10-kilometre radius of Ahmi\_i village in central Bosnia-Herzegovina, in which every Bosniac (Bosnian Muslim)-owned house was burned and many unarmed civilians were deliberately and systematically shot. The men had been indicted in November 1995.

Nine of the men voluntarily surrendered while one other, who had been in detention in Zagreb, Croatia since August 1997, was transferred to the Tribunal. At least one other man who has been charged with the wanton destruction of Ahmi\_i village and the willful killing of Bosnian Muslim civilians is believed to be living in an area of Bosnia-Herzegovina regularly patrolled by multinational troops of the Stabilization Force (SFOR).

"These crimes are not the result of new information -- the international community has been aware for years of what happened during the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, and knows where the suspects who have been indicted for these crimes by the Tribunal are," Amnesty International said.

"Those who want to see justice done cannot afford to rely solely on the other suspects taking the preferable route of voluntarily surrender. The international community should demonstrate its firm resolve that appearing before the Tribunal is an inescapable destiny for those indicted by it by instructing SFOR to *Arrest Now!*"

"There is no doubt that such arrests risk short-term disruption and -- to quote one of the excuses offered for inaction -- '*shock*' in the local community," Amnesty International said. "However, failing to plan for and respond to such risks will only '*shock*' future generations in evaluating how the international community, faced with some of the worst crimes committed in Europe since the Second World War, lived up to its promise made after that war -- its promise of '*never again*'."

More than 50 additional people, the majority Bosnian Serbs, remain at large in Bosnia-Herzegovina for other crimes including rape and sexual enslavement of women in Fo\_a, killings and torture of detainees in Br\_ko with the intent to destroy a substantial or significant part of the Bosnian Muslim people, and torture and killings described as part of a widespread, systematic or large-scale attack against the Bosnian Croat and Bosniac residents of Bosanski Šamac municipality.

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For further information, please see Amnesty International report: *Bosnia-Herzegovina: How can they sleep at night? Arrest Now!*