

PUBLIC

AI Index: EUR 64/006/2008

28 November 2008

UA 329/08 Fear for safety

CROATIA Drago Hedl (m), journalist

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Journalist Drago Hedl has received a series of death threats, most recently on 27 November. The threats are believed to be connected to his investigative reports linking a high-level Croatian politician to the killing of Croatian Serbs in the town of Osijek during the 1991-1995 war. Drago Hedl's life is in danger.

On 27 November Drago Hedl received a text message on his mobile phone, which included the following line: "Again you and your articles. You and this Fehir [the alias used by one of Drago Hedl's informants] better watch out. It will not finish just like that. We will massacre you. You will be both blown in the air".

Drago Hedl reported the threat to police and has been granted 24-hour police protection. However, he continues to fear for his safety, as the intimidation of journalists in Croatia has increased, and the authorities have failed to investigate those responsible and bring them to justice.

Drago Hedl is a columnist for the Croatian daily newspaper Jutarnji List. He has won international awards for his investigative work. He works mostly on reporting war crimes committed during the 1991-1995 war in Croatia, particularly those committed in the Osijek area, where the alleged perpetrator is still in position of power. He has received at least four death threats previously, most recently in April 2008.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Nobody has yet been brought to justice for recent attacks on journalists which have taken place during 2008.

In October Ivo Pukanić, owner of the Croatian weekly Nacional, was killed by a car bomb in the capital, Zagreb. The killing was believed to be related to the newspaper's investigations of organized crime in the former Yugoslavia.

In June Dušan Miljuš, a journalist for Jutarnji List, was beaten in front of his house in Zagreb following his reports on links between politicians and illegal business activities.

In November a fake bomb was planted under journalist Hrvoje Appelt's car. This is believed to be related to his investigation of oil smuggling, which reportedly involved organized crime groups from other south-east European countries.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English, Croatian or your own language:**

- expressing concern at the safety of Drago Hedl, after he received a series of death threats, most recently on 27 November;
- urging the authorities to conduct a prompt, impartial and effective investigation to ensure that those responsible for such threats are brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to continue providing police protection to Drago Hedl;
- noting that there have been a number of attacks on journalists during 2008, including the killing of Ivo Pukanić;

- calling on the authorities to outline the measures they are taking to prevent further attacks, to carry prompt, impartial and effective investigations and to guarantee that journalists can exercise their right to freedom of expression without fear of reprisal.

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Interior

Tomislav Karamarko

Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova Republike Hrvatske

Ulica grada Vukovara 33

10000 Zagreb, Croatia

**Fax: +385 1 6122 452**

**Email: [ministar@mup.hr](mailto:ministar@mup.hr)**

**Salutation: Dear Minister**

General Police Director

Vladimir Faber

General Police Directorate

Ilica 335

10000 Zagreb, Croatia

**Fax: +385 1 3788 545**

**Email: [policija@mup.hr](mailto:policija@mup.hr)**

**Salutation: Dear Director**

State Attorney's Office of the Republic of Croatia

Mladen Bajic

Državno odvjetništvo Republike Hrvatske

Gajeva 30a

10000 Zagreb

Fax: +385 1 4591854

**Email: [tajnistvo.dorh@dorh.hr](mailto:tajnistvo.dorh@dorh.hr)**

**Salutation: Dear State Attorney**

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of Croatia accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 9 January 2009.