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Bosnia and Herzegovina: No justice for rape victims

The conviction of Milan and Sredoje Lukić for war crimes and crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (Tribunal) brings justice for the killing of scores of people during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina but ignores the suffering of victims of sexual violence, Amnesty International said today.

The Bosnian Serb cousins, members of the White Eagles paramilitary group, were convicted on 20 July of crimes against the civilian population in the Višegrad area in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1992-1995 war, including murder, persecution, extermination, torture. Milan and Sredoje Lukić were sentenced to life and 30 years' imprisonment respectively.

Amnesty International deeply regrets that the Prosecutor failed to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity of sexual violence, including rape, that were alleged to have been committed and that no one has been charged by the Tribunal for these crimes.

"The raped women of Višegrad deserve justice too. Those responsible for these crimes should also be held to account," said Nicola Duckworth, Europe and Central Asia Programme Director at Amnesty International.

"Over a decade after the war, these women are forced to live with the memories of their suffering without being able to receive acknowledgement and compensation."

Credible evidence of the abduction of young women who were subsequently held and subjected to rape and other crimes of sexual violence at the Vilina Vlas hotel near Višegrad has been gathered by the Tribunal and the State Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina which points to the alleged responsibility of the Lukić cousins for rape and other crimes of sexual violence. A number of non-governmental organizations have also documented testimonies of victims who allege that they were raped by members of paramilitary groups under Milan Lukić's command. Amnesty International in 1993 documented two cases in which girls reported that they had been raped in Vilina Vlas hotel, allegedly by members of the White Eagles, which was under Milan Lukić's command.

Amnesty International calls on the prosecutor at the State Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina to open an investigation into the substantial number of allegations against Milan and Sredoje Lukić related to war crimes and crimes against humanity of sexual violence committed in the Višegrad area.

Background

Rape and other forms of sexual violence were widespread during the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Despite the fact that the conflict ended more than 13 years ago successive governments have consistently failed to bring those responsible to justice.

Many perpetrators of war crimes of sexual violence continue to enjoy impunity and often live in the same communities as their victims. Survivors of those crimes suffer trauma and other psychological and physical problems. Psychological support is often not available and access to health services is limited, especially for women in remote areas of the country. Many survivors are unemployed and live in poverty and cannot afford medicines, even when these are prescribed by a doctor.