

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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"Disappearance"/

3 March 1993

Fear of deliberate and arbitrary killings

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: Around 25 men including:

Adem Alomerovi_

Rasim_ori_

Fevzija Zekovi_

Fikret Memovi_

Najazija Kajevi_

Esad Kapetanovi_

Ismet Babi_i_

Samir Rastoder

Senad Djecevi_

Halil Zup_evi_

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of some 25 men, including those named above, who were abducted from a train on 27 February 1993 at the village of Štrpci (which lies just inside Bosnia-Herzegovina) by uniformed and armed men and whose present whereabouts are unknown.

The men were travelling on a passenger train on the line from Belgrade (the capital of Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) to Bar (a port in Montenegro). About 10 km of this line runs through the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina in an area which is under the control of Serbian forces. According to the limited information available, the armed men wore the uniforms of the police (possibly the military police) of the self-proclaimed "Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina". After entering the train they reportedly checked passengers' identity cards and then forcibly removed about 25 men (some reports have stated as many as 40) who were then taken away in lorries.

The men named above are reportedly Muslims from Prijepolje, Bijelo Polje, Bar and Podgorica in Montenegro. One of them, Halil Zup_evi_, is said to be a refugee from Trebinje in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, it appears that the abducted men also include Serbs from Bosnia-Herzegovina, who had previously taken refuge in the Republic of Serbia. It is thought that the reason for their abduction may have been to punish them for failing to take up arms with Serbian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The governments of Serbia and Montenegro have expressed their condemnation of these abductions and have announced that measures have been taken to find the men who have disappeared. However, authorities in the nearby Serbian town of U_ice reportedly gave no official response to journalists' inquiries about the incident, on the grounds that the abduction had taken place on the territory of another state.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This incident follows a pattern similar to a previous abduction of 17 Muslims from the Sand_ak area in October 1992 (see UA 356/92, EUR 70/02/92, 16 November 1992). In both cases

the abductors were reportedly armed Serbs, although in this most recent incident, unlike the first, the victims reportedly include Serbs. The Sand_ak region, with a population of between 350,000 and 440,000 (over half Slav Muslims) includes border areas of Serbia and Montenegro and adjoins Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Since the outbreak of hostilities in the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the situation in the Sand_ak has been tense and local leaders have warned of the danger that Sand_ak might be drawn into the Bosnian conflict. Muslim leaders have pointed to the presence of armed paramilitaries from Serbia, Serbian-held territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro in the area, and to the increasingly frequent reports of the intimidation of local Muslims, including physical attacks. Large numbers of Muslims have fled the area because local authorities have been unable, or unwilling, to guarantee their safety. At

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the same time, a considerable number of Muslim refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina have come into the region. In October 1992 the Chief of General Staff of the Army of Yugoslavia claimed that 15,000 Muslims in the Sand_ak had armed themselves; other sources in Serbia claim that over 1,500 Sand_ak Muslims have joined Muslim forces fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Muslim leaders have denied this.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send texes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English, French, German or in your own language:

- expressing concern at the reported "disappearance" of some 25 men, including both Muslims and Serbs, following their abduction from a train crossing Serbian-held territory in the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina on 27 February 1993. Stating that reports indicate that they were abducted by members of Serbian forces from Bosnia-Herzegovina;

- urging the fullest cooperation by military, police and judicial authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Republic of Serbia and representatives of the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina with a view to the rapid release of the abducted men if they are detained, or, if this is not the case, clarification of their fate;

- urging that those responsible for their abduction be detained and brought to justice;

- urging that appropriate measures be taken to guarantee the safety of civilians travelling in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, whose route obliges them to cross Serbian-held territory of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

APPEALS TO

1) Representative of the Bosnian Serbs:

Dr Radovan Karad_i_
Biro Republike Srpske
Moše Pijade 8
11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

Faxes: + 38 11 338 633

Salutation: Dear Dr Karad_i_

2) Commander of Serbian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina:

General Ratko Mladi_
Biro Republike Srpske
Moše Pijade 8
11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

Faxes: + 38 11 338 633

Salutation: Dear General Mladi_

3) President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Head of State:

Prof. dr Dobrica _osi_
Predsednik SRJ
Bulevar Lenjina 2

Salutation: Dear President _osi_

11070 Beograd, Yugoslavia

Telexes: 11062 siv yu

Faxes: + 38-11-636 775

4) Chief of General Staff of the Army of Yugoslavia:

General ivota Pani_

Na_elnik Generalštaba Vojske Jugoslavije

Kneza Miloša 37,

Beograd, Yugoslavia

Salutation: Dear General Pani_

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

1) Minister of Internal Affairs of the
Republic of Serbia:

Zoran Sokolovi_

Ministar unutrašnjih poslova Republike

Srbije

Kneza Miloša 101

11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia

Faxes: +38 11 683 041

and to diplomatic representatives of Yugoslavia accredited to your country

2) Federal Minister for Human Rights and
National Minorities:

Savezni ministar za ljudska prava i
nacionalne manjine

Dr Mom_ilo Gruba_

Bulevar Lenjina 2

11070 Beograd, Yugoslavia

Faxes: + 38 11 636 775 or + 38 11 195 244

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 15 April 1993.