

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

MEDIA BRIEFING

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Amnesty International's work in Bosnia and Herzegovina

1992-1995

- During the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) Amnesty International documented testimonies of many women subjected to systematic rape, as well as sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and other crimes of sexual violence. Since then, Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the authorities of BiH to investigate and prosecute those responsible and to provide survivors with effective reparation, including restitution, compensation, rehabilitation and guarantees of non-repetition.

2008-2009

- In 2008, 13 years after the end of the war, Amnesty International returned to BiH to speak to survivors of crimes of sexual violence and about their experiences when trying to access justice, truth and reparation for these crimes.
- As a result of this research, Amnesty International concluded that the authorities had failed to ensure these survivors' rights. While most perpetrators have never been brought to justice, the survivors of these crimes were still struggling to rebuild their shattered lives. For years, they have been denied their basic rights, especially to access adequate health care, and to get official recognition as civilian victims of war.
- In 2009, Amnesty International began its international campaign against impunity for wartime rape and other crimes of sexual violence committed in BiH with the launch of a report *"Whose Justice? Bosnia and Herzegovina's Women are still waiting"*.
- The campaign was developed in partnership with local women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and survivors still living in BiH. The campaign was contributed to by Amnesty International's national offices and supporters around the world including in the US, Canada, UK, Japan, Austria, Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, Poland, and Slovakia. It called on the BiH government to change discriminatory state policies and laws that were denying survivors justice, truth and reparation.
- Since that report, Amnesty International representatives have consistently lobbied the UN and the European Union, urging them to put pressure on the BiH authorities to fulfil their national and international obligations in relation to the survivors of war-time rape.
- The organization also continues to work with local women's groups, who have been the main providers of psychosocial assistance for the survivors.

2010-2011

- Amnesty International's members (approx. 3 million worldwide) and its supporters sent numerous appeals to the BiH authorities calling on them to address, as a matter of urgency, the failure to ensure justice and proper reparation for this group of survivors of wartime crimes. They have also been raising public awareness of the issue in their own countries.
- Following massive campaigning by Amnesty International and other civil society organizations and institutions, the state government of BiH made a series of specific commitments to the United Nations Human Rights Council and Committee against Torture, and to the European Commission on ensuring survivors' rights, including:
 - The development of a programme to improve the living situation of the survivors and ensure their right to reparation (currently still in the drafting phase);
 - The adoption of a state Law on the Rights of Victims of Torture and Civilian Victims of War, which would ensure that all civilian victims of war (including victims of wartime

- rape) living in the country have equal access to social protection and measures of psycho-social and economic support (currently blocked due to political stalemate);
- Ensuring survivors' right to justice by improving the legal framework, (making it consistent with the highest international legal standards), and the functioning of the justice system in general (reform of the process of investigations and prosecutions, witness protection and support).
- However, the BiH authorities have so far failed to implement any of these commitments, largely due to the ongoing political deadlock. As a result, very little has changed for the survivors' in the 18 years since the war ended.

2012-

Amnesty International's Campaign for survivors of wartime rape in BiH continues

- With the launch of [*Old crimes same suffering: No justice for survivors of wartime rape in north-east Bosnia and Herzegovina*](#) on 29 March 2012, Amnesty International continued its campaign for survivors' rights.
- A further step in the campaigning is the research in Amnesty International's latest report, [*When everyone is silent: Reparation for survivors of war-time rape in Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina*](#), which gives a snapshot of the situation today of women survivors of war-time rape living in the RS and calls on the RS authorities to acknowledge their suffering and provide redress.
- A short documentary film, [*Still on the Frontline*](#), looks at the issues facing women war rape survivors in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The film follows Amnesty International research on the ground and includes interviews with survivors, activists and government officials.
- Once again the organization calls on the state government to meet its international legal obligations to guarantee the survivors' rights to justice, truth and reparation.
- It also calls on the municipal authorities, to take action to improve their delivery of the local services that enable the survivors to access their rights in everyday life (e.g. health care, the courts), and especially to provide these services without discrimination on any ground and in accordance with the law.
- Amnesty International will continue campaigning against impunity for crimes of sexual violence under international law committed during the war and for proper reparation for the survivors of these crimes.

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