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BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DELEGATE VISITS CROATIA

An Amnesty International delegate is visiting Croatia from tomorrow to investigate the latest reports of human rights abuses in the Bosnian Serb-controlled areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Despite a welcome reduction in human rights abuses in the Bosnian Government-controlled and Bosnian Croat-controlled areas, Amnesty International is concerned by an apparent increase in human rights abuses in towns in the Serbian-controlled areas, particularly Banja Luka.

The human rights organization is receiving an increasing number of reports from these areas of killings, robbery, rape, harassment and forcible eviction -- both directly by Bosnian Serb soldiers or by civilians with the apparent complicity of the de facto authorities. Amnesty International is also concerned that Serbs may be being imprisoned for refusing to fight with the army in these areas.

The organization's delegate hopes to gather more detailed information about these human rights abuses and will be speaking with refugees in Croatia who are either victims or eye-witnesses of the recent abuses.

Amnesty International is also concerned by recent reports of Serbs being imprisoned in Sarajevo for desertion or avoiding army call-up.

The organization is urging President Alija Izetbegovi_ to inquire into reports that two Serbs, Marko and Velibor Lalovi_, were arrested in Sarajevo in January and charged with evading military service as a result of refusing to carry arms on conscientious grounds.

Although the Lalovi_s were reportedly released last week, they have been ordered to report to the army again today and may again refuse to carry arms on conscientious grounds. Amnesty International fears they will again be imprisoned.

Amnesty International has also urged President Izetbegovi_ to clarify the legal basis of charges against a group of five doctors and three nurses who were reportedly detained by Bosnian Government forces in Sarajevo in January. They are reportedly to be tried for "avoiding military service" on 4 April.

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