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Croatia: War Crimes Suspect Arrested

Amnesty International has welcomed the arrest of a former Croatian military official accused of responsibility for war crimes committed during the 1991-95 war.

Tomislav Merčep, who was named by Amnesty International in a report released yesterday as an individual whose case needed urgent attention, was arrested in Zagreb this morning at the request of the country's state prosecutor.

"The arrest of Tomislav Merčep is a welcome development. Investigations into those alleged to have been involved in war crimes has been slow in coming," said Nicola Duckworth, Europe and Central Asia Programme Director at Amnesty International.

"People need to know the truth about events from the recent past that have marred the lives of many. Victims and their families need justice. The Croatian authorities must intensify efforts to investigate and, if appropriate, to prosecute all those responsible for committing crimes during the 1991-95 war."

The arrest comes one day after the release of an Amnesty International report that called on Croatia to speed up the investigation and prosecution of war crime suspects.

The report, *Behind a Wall of Silence; Prosecution of War Crimes in Croatia*, identified Tomislav Merčep as one of several high-profile individuals suspected of war crimes.

Among a number of allegations against Tomislav Merčep, one member of a unit has publicly stated that the units reportedly under his command acted on his orders to kill and torture civilians and steal their property. Until now, these allegations have never been fully investigated.

Military commanders and civilian superiors have clear responsibilities under international law to prevent crimes, punish them, and refer cases involving their subordinates to prosecuting authorities.

An Amnesty International delegation is currently in Zagreb to present the report to Croatian and international authorities, including the President, the Ministry of Justice, the State Attorney, and the European Union Delegation in Croatia.

Notes to editors

For comment on this development and on the findings of the report, please contact the Amnesty International Press Office on +44 207 413 5566

A copy of the report, *Behind a Wall of Silence, Prosecution of War Crimes in Croatia*, can be found here:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR64/003/2010/en/81544213-9880-4a5e-acea-d5269d0bc8ad/eur640032010en.pdf>