

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 318/93 Deliberate and arbitrary detentions of  
civilians/fear of torture, ill-treatment  
and deliberate and arbitrary killings

10 September 1993

**BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: Detained Croatian and Serbian civilians and captured  
combatants in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

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Amnesty International is concerned about the detention of Croatian and Serbian civilians and the ill-treatment to which they, together with captured combatants, may have been exposed in central Bosnia-Herzegovina.

According to figures released on 8 September 1993 by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), around 650 Serbs and 579 Croats are being held by Bosnian Government forces in 24 detention centres in the region. Reports also indicate the existence of other detention centres to which international agencies have not had access, although this may be partly due to fighting in the area.

Bosnian Croat army commanders have claimed that around 3,400 Croats are being held by Bosnian Government forces in Bugojno, central Bosnia, and that 900 soldiers and civilians are being detained in Jablanica (both in central Bosnia). One hundred and sixty-three soldiers are also being held in Mostar in the south.

A report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur for former Yugoslavia of 6 September refers to the detention of Croat and Serb civilians in Vrap\_i\_i in, the area of Mostar controlled by Government forces. They have allegedly been used as "human shields" and for forced labour close to the front-lines.

According to Croatian sources, Croats are also being held in other detention camps, namely that of Šenkovi\_i near Novi Travnik. Amnesty has also learnt of the possible detentions of Serbs in Gora\_de, Tuzla and Tar\_in (where Croats may also be held).

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The majority of detentions recorded by the ICRC in 1992 were of Muslims and Croats by Bosnian Serbs. Despite large-scale releases there are fears that an unknown number of people are still being held. The Bosnian Government and Bosnian Croat forces have also detained smaller numbers of Serbs. Bosnian Croat forces and the mainly Muslim Bosnian Government forces were formerly in an uneasy alliance against the Serbs. Since the almost total collapse of this alliance in May 1993, many of the locations used by these two sides last year to detain Serbs have been used to detain Croats and Muslims respectively.

By 20 August, the Croatian Defence Council (HVO) which organizes the Croatian

forces with the support of the Republic of Croatia, had reportedly detained up to 15,000 Muslims. They have been held mainly in the Mostar area which is the scene of bitter fighting as the two sides battle for control of the town. Following releases in late August and early September this number may have reduced, although Amnesty International believes substantial numbers remain. For information on and appeals for Muslim detainees see UA 315/93, EUR 63/18/93, 9 September 1993.

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

- expressing concern about reports of detention of civilians, and of the ill-treatment and inhuman conditions to which Croat and Serb civilians and captured combatants have reportedly been exposed;
- stressing that Amnesty International is concerned for victims of all nationalities and is regularly appealing to all sides involved in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina;
- urging the release of all civilians detained solely because of their national or ethnic origin or held as hostages;
- urging that Bosnian Government forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina abide by fundamental human rights and humanitarian law standards, in particular the four 1949 Geneva Conventions and additional protocols;
- urging that international humanitarian organizations, such as the International Red Cross, be given access to all places where Bosnian Government forces are holding detainees;
- stressing that no one - whether detained or not - should be tortured or subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- stating that Amnesty International believes that abuses committed by one side cannot be used as justification for acts carried out by another.

**APPEALS TO**

1. President of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina:

His Excellency Dr Alija Izetbegovi\_  
Predsjednik Republike Bosne i Hercegovine  
Preko Ambasade Bosne i Hercegovine  
Pantov\_ak 96  
41000 Zagreb  
Croatia

**Faxes: + 38 41 441 899**

**Salutation : Dear President**

2. Commander in Chief of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina:

General Rasim Deli\_  
Na\_elnik glavnog štaba Armije BH  
Preko Ambasade Bosne i Hercegovine  
Pantov\_ak 96  
41000 Zagreb  
Croatia

**Faxes: + 38 41 441 899**

**Salutation : Dear General**

(Please note that, as with previous previous appeals, no direct communications are feasible with the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sarajevo, because of the siege by Bosnian Serb forces.)

and to diplomatic representatives of Bosnia-Herzegovina accredited to your

country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 October 1993.