

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 126/95

Ill-Treatment / Fear for Safety

27 October 1995

CROATIAGoran FLAUDER, editor of the weekly newspaper *Bumerang*

Amnesty International is concerned for the safety of journalist Goran Flauder, editor of the weekly newspaper, *Bumerang*, which is published in the eastern Croatian town of Osijek. On 26 October Goran Flauder was beaten and otherwise ill-treated by what appeared to be a plainclothes police officer, while he was photographing members of the ruling *Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica* (HDZ), Croatian Democratic Union. The beating followed a series of reported incidents in which he states that he was threatened by Osijek County's leading official.

From about 2pm on 26 October 1995, Goran Flauder was photographing members of the HDZ as they prepared for an election rally (parliamentary elections are due to be held on 29 October 1995) in the main square of the town. At about 2.30pm a heavily-built man, apparently a plainclothes police officer, approached him and attempted to confiscate his camera. Goran Flauder tried to run away but fell. The man followed and started to kick him as he lay on the ground. Goran Flauder started to resist and three uniformed police officers came to the scene and tried to defend him against the attack. However, the plainclothes officer and his companion appeared to order them away. The plain clothes officers again caught Goran Flauder as he tried to run away to another street, hit him again and then smashed his camera.

Goran Flauder sought medical treatment and reported the incident to the police. He reports a series of incidents in which he has been threatened or ordered to leave public places by the Prefect of Osijek County. He states that in the same square on 22 October, he was reporting on a local function along with other journalists when he was ordered to leave by the County Prefect.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Much controversy has surrounded the media in Croatia, particularly in connection with the privatization of state-owned publishing houses. Critics have claimed that the new owners are largely obedient to the ruling HDZ authorities and that the privatized publications are effectively part of the official media. A handful of independent publications, including *Bumerang*, do operate although some have complained that various forms of pressure have been applied to them by the authorities. The weekly, *Feral Tribune*, for example, was for a while subject to extra purchase tax, as it was classified as a "pornographic" publication. One of the editors was also briefly mobilized into the armed forces in early 1994 in an apparent attempt to put pressure on his publication.

Another journalist writing for *Bumerang* and *Feral Tribune*, Drago Hedl, was subject to threats from the Osijek County Prefect, Branimir Glava_, in 1994. Journalists writing for independent publications have been subject to vilification in articles in the official media and are accused of having sympathy for the old Yugoslavia or being enemies of Croatia.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, German, French or in your own language:

- expressing concern that a man believed to be a plainclothes police officer beat Goran Flauder as he was carrying out his journalistic duties in Osijek on 26 October 1995;
- emphasizing your concern that uniformed police officers who came to the assistance of Goran Lauder were reportedly ordered away;

- calling for a thorough, independent and impartial investigation into the reported attack on Goran Lauder and, if his complaint is upheld, for the perpetrators to be held responsible for their actions;
- expressing your concern that independent journalists in Osijek have been subject to harassment and threats;
- calling for special measures be taken to ensure the security of Goran Lauder or other independent journalists in the town of Osijek and to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

APPEALS TO:

Minister of Internal Affairs

Mr Ivan Jarnjak

Ministar

Ministarstvo za unutrašnje poslove Republike Hrvatske

Savska cesta 39

10000 Zagreb CROATIA

Faxes: +385 1 443 715

Telegrams: Jarnjak, MUP RH, Croatia

Salutation: Dear Minister

Chief of Police of the town of Osijek

Šef policijske uprave Osijeka

Dubravko Jezer_i_

Policijska Uprava Osijek

31000 Osijek CROATIA

Faxes: +385 31 137 245

Telegrams: Jzercic, Sef PU Osijek, Croatia

Salutation: Dear Officer

Prefect of the Osijek-Baranja County

dipl. iur. Branimir Glavaš

_upan Osje_ko-Baranjski

Trg Ante Star_evi_a 2

Osijek CROATIA

Faxes: +385 31 232

Telegrams: Glavas, Zupan Osijecko-Baranjski, Osijek, Croatia

Salutation: Dear Mr Glavaš

COPIES TO:

Goran Flauder, Editor

Bumerang

Ribarska 1

31000 Osijek CROATIA

and to diplomatic representatives of Croatia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 24 November 1995.