



Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past
Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights Osijek
Civic Committee for Human Rights

Zagreb, Osijek, 20 June 2011

Delayed criminal prosecution of unresolved crimes in Sisak between 1991 – 1992

Many killings of civilians committed in the area of Sisak at the beginning of war conflicts, in the second half of 1991 and during 1992, have not been resolved up to now. Unresolved criminal acts of war crimes comprise, *inter alia*, forceful takings, detentions, abuses and killings of Serb civilians.

Having analyzed restitution proceedings initiated before the Sisak Municipal Court by the families of forcefully taken, killed or missing persons whose bodies have not been found up to now, and having analyzed the accompanying documentation in those cases, in particular autopsy reports (autopsy or external examination of 64 bodies was performed upon the order of the-then Sisak District Court during 1991-92), having spoken with the relatives of killed persons and having read press articles, we came to the conclusion that all victims died a violent death and that no-one was held responsible for their killing, although it was possible to identify perpetrators of those acts from available data.

The fact that there was no criminal prosecution in those cases also influenced the outcome of civil lawsuits for restitution of damage. In all murder cases in Sisak that we analyzed, relatives of killed persons were not able to receive compensation of damage. The majority of plaintiffs must live under threat of being forced to pay the expenses of litigation proceedings, which in some instances amounts to HRK 75,000.

After almost two decades of pre-investigation activities, the Chief State Attorney in September 2010 stripped the investigation of war crimes in Sisak from the Sisak State Attorney's Office, which has not done anything for years in terms of revealing those crimes, and assigned it to the Osijek State Attorney's Office. According to information from the media, Đuro Brodarac, Vladimir Milanković and one direct perpetrator of crimes were arrested this morning for war crimes against civilians in the area of Sisak.

According to information from the spokesperson of the Osijek State Attorney's Office, criminal investigation against three arrested persons (Đuro Brodarac, Vlado Milanković, Drago Bošnjak, as head of paramilitary group called Vukovi – the Wolves) is underway, their homes and weekend cottages have been searched. Đuro Brodarac as Head of Sisak Police during the war and Vladimir Milanković as commander of all active and reserve formations within the Sisak Police Administration are suspected of having had command responsibility over war crimes committed in 1991 and 1992. It was precisely the aforementioned two persons who were approached for

help during those war days by desperate families of missing persons searching for their loved ones, but they did not receive any answers, while some of them testified that Brodarac would receive them in a rude and harsh manner.

The exact number of killed and missing civilians from Sisak and surrounding villages has not been precisely determined up to now. Within the framework of the research project titled "Human Losses in Croatia between 1991 - 1995" we managed to identify some of killed and missing civilians:

Borojević, Stevo – born on 10 September 1946 – on 6 October 1991 he was stopped by Croatian Military members at the control checkpoint in Odra, his body was found 13 days later, the cause of death: stabbing wounds in the area of neck and chest, as well as gunshot wounds to the head; the autopsy report was compiled on 18 October 1991.

Cvetojević, Milan – born in 1935 in Donje Javornje near Dvor. He worked at the Sisak oil refinery and lived in Mošćenica. On 19 September 1991 he was taken from his house by three persons wearing camouflage uniforms without insignia, killed by gunshots to the back of his head and then thrown into Sava river. His body was found near Kovin.

Jelić, Vaso – born on 9 August 1931 in Bijele Vode (Glina municipality), lived in Sisak and worked at the Sisak iron and steel plant. Taken from his own house on 15 November 1991, around 21:45 h by five perpetrators wearing camouflage uniforms. His dead body was found on 9 February 1992 in bushes in the area of Galdovo in Sisak.

Kovačević, Kuzma – born around 1940. Worked at the Sisak iron and steel plant and resided in Sisak. He was killed in his house in Sisak in the summer of '92.

Miodrag, Stojan – born on 2 February 1950 in Gornje Javornje (Dvor municipality), lived in Sisak (Caprag). He worked at the iron and steel plant. On 24 September 1991, for the purpose of social security, he was carrying a confirmation of his daughter's school attendance to Lipa Street in Sisak, but on the way from his home he was kidnapped by unknown perpetrators and taken into unknown direction. On 29 September 1991 he was found dead, with gunshot wounds to the head, on a garbage disposal facility between Galdovo and Budaševo.

Nikolić, Gradoljub – born on 19 January 1941 in Prokuplje (municipality of Niš, Serbia), lived in Sisak. He worked at the oil refinery. On 26 September 1991 he was taken from his work post and his dead body was found 2 days later at a meadow in Galdovo, along with the body of another man. His wife was never officially informed about it, and his body was buried at the social cemetery.

Oljača, Branko – born in October 1955 in Buzeta (Glina municipality). He worked as a member of SUP (Secretariat of Public Security) in Sisak. In August 1991 he was taken from his apartment, and several days after his disappearance, his sister-in-law (his brother's wife) identified his massacred body at the Sisak mortuary.

Pajagić, Petar – economist, worked as a head of office at the Sisak oil refinery – disappeared on 20 September 1991 on the way from his daughter's apartment to his apartment in Sisak.

Solar, Ljubica – born on 10 May 1972 in Sisak. In the night between 17 and 18 September 1991, she was shot by a sniper through the window of her boyfriend's apartment (former member of the JNA – Yugoslav People's Army).

Vergaš, Vatroslav – born on 23 June 1959, lived in Sisak, worked as a security guard at Dunavski Lloyd. On 29 November 1991 two unknown persons (members of the Croatian Armed Forces, according to the claims of his parents contained in their lawsuit against the Republic of Croatia) took him away from his work post just before the change of shift, around 22 h, in the direction of Lukavac village where he was killed by firearms (gunshot wounds to the head and body).

Vila family, (Marko, born in 1927; Evica, born in 1933; Dušan, born in 1959; Mladen, born in 1951; Željko born in 1961) – taken from their house in August '91. They were killed and thrown into Sava river.

Zlokapa, Simo – born in 1920 in Crkveni Bok, lived in Sisak as a retired person. He was taken from his house in September 1991 by unknown persons, in the presence of his wife. She asked where they were taking him, they said he would be back soon, but he was found dead in Galdovo, killed by firearms.

This is far from a final list of all Serb civilian victims from Sisak area, therefore it is necessary to continue with the process of establishing identities and circumstances of suffering of all victims, as well as prosecuting all crimes. The aforementioned examples indicate similar pattern of committing criminal acts, where the majority of

victims was killed by firearms, while some bodies of killed victims indicated signs of severe abuse before those persons were killed.

It is outrageous that victims' families have been awaiting justice for almost twenty years although in litigation proceedings many of them testified about the manner in which their closest ones were taken and about the persons who took them. It is high time to shed light on those crimes through criminal prosecution! Apart from that, the Government of the Republic of Croatia should urgently pass a decision on writing off litigation expenses for all those who filed lawsuits against the Republic of Croatia due to death of a close person in the period from 1991 - 1995 and to establish a fund for compensating all war victims.

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