

WITNESS STATEMENT

dated 16 September 1994 before investigative judge of the
Basic court in Zvornik in the criminal proceedings
against [no entry] due to criminal offence from Article [no entry] of KZ¹.

investigative - judge

witness

Erić Vaso

Ilija Ivanović

Recording clerk

Persons present at witness testimony:
public prosecutor

Ružica Jaić

[no entry]

STATEMENT

I was born in the village of Ćosići, Skelani municipality, where I finished primary school, and I learned the plumbing trade in Belgrade, after which I got a job in Projektomontaža company in Belgrade. I married Nada Jevtić from the village of Božići, with whom I do not have any children.

The beginning of the war in former BiH caught me in Tivt where I was on field work, and since I heard that my native village was endangered from all sides by Muslim armed forces attack, I came to the newly-formed Skelane [sic] municipality and I applied as a volunteer to, within territorial defence, defend the area from potential attacks.

In that area, I stayed until 16 January 1993 when the Muslim armed forces, around 6 o'clock, carried out an attack at Skelane [sic] and surrounding villages. During the attack, I was in my native village of Ćosići and I took part in resistance, i.e. defence of civilian population. On that occasion, I was wounded by a bomb on the right side of my body, i.e. right leg, arm, and head, and was captured by the Muslims as a wounded casualty.

After capturing me, they escorted me on foot to the village of Kragivode, and from there I was transported by truck to Srebrenica that same night.

I was imprisoned in SUP² building in Srebrenica in cell, dimensions of which were 2x2m, with concrete floor, no furniture, and there was a small window in it with bars and no glass. In front of that cell, there was a small anteroom which was entered from the corridor.

¹ Translator's note: the Criminal Code

² t/n: Secretariat of interior

In that cell I found the following prisoners: Ratko Nikolić from the village of Kravice³ [sic] near Bratunac, Mića, whose surname I do not know, from the village of Sase, and Koja, whose real name and surname I do not know, and who, as I later found out, owned a café by the school in Bratunac. A captive Mile Trifunović from the village of Arapovići near Skelani was brought to the cell after me.

In that prison I stayed for two and a half days. During that time, I was interrogated on which unit I had been in, who was my commander, how many Muslims I killed, and so on. I do not know the persons who interrogated me.

While I and the aforementioned were imprisoned in that cell, we were beaten individually, mostly in the small anteroom. They beat us with bats, rifle butts, fists, and kicked us. Among other ways

[signature in Cyrillic: Ivanović Ilija]

- 3 -

in which they beat me, they abused and beat me by grabbing my ears and hitting my head against the iron bars, putting a knife to my eyes, threatening that they would cut them out, pulling my ear, threatening that they would cut it off, beating me with a knife handle, beating me with a stone in the head.

I do not know the names and surnames of those who beat me in the cell in SUP, but some of them I know by sight and I could recognize them now if I met them.

After two and a half days of imprisonment in SUP in Srebrenica, the aforementioned four prisoners and I were transferred to another prison which was in a smaller building between Municipal building and Court. The room where we were imprisoned was somewhat bigger than the previous one, and it had concrete floor with worn linoleum, no beds nor other furniture, and we got one blanket per two persons. In that room we found no one. After that, prisoners from other parts started arriving, mostly from the area of Cerska. I remember Branko Sekulić from Sase, who worked in Zemun in a hunting association, Pejčić Rade, also from around Sase, Bogdan, whose surname I do not know, Milomir Đukić from Zenica, captured in Kravice [sic], was earlier in hospital because he was wounded in both legs, two men whose names and surnames I do not know and who were brought from Cersa [sic] where they were imprisoned for about 8 months and according to what they said were severely abused, and I can obtain their names subsequently, Miloje - Mican from Gvizovići near Skelani, and Stanko from Kušići -

³ t/n: actual name of village is Kravica

Skelani, whose surname I do not know, and he was handicapped since birth.

Immediately upon arriving to that prison, they continued to beat us daily. We were regularly beaten by two men - one military policeman and one civilian policeman. They beat us with brass rods, baseball bats, boots, knives, rifle butts, guns, in short, with anything they could. Besides them, other soldiers who returned from the battlefield also came and beat us similarly like the aforementioned two did. Most often they came around 22 o'clock and beat us until just before dawn. Some women came with them who, while they were beating us, burned papers for them to see better because there was no electric light. They mainly beat us in the cell where we were imprisoned. They often took us out by one or two to the guardroom

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- 4 -

and there they also abused and beat us. On one occasion, they took me, Pejčić Rade, and the aforementioned two whose names I cannot remember, to the guardroom. Besides beating each of us individually, they set Rade Pejčić's beard on fire, and then they pushed his head into a brick oven intending to set it on fire, but one of the Muslim soldiers stopped then at the last moment. Now I remember that Pejčić Rade is from the village of Gobelj near Cerska. They wanted to shave the beard off one of those two men whose names I do not know using a knife and cut his face during that. On that occasion, among other things, they threw us on the ground, beat us with different objects and ruthlessly stomped on us. Such beatings often happened in that room.

During the aforementioned beating, among Muslims soldiers who abused us, I recognized Džemo Tihić from the village of Liješće whom I personally know because his house is near my village. On that occasion, Džemo distinguished himself when it came to roughness and abuse, and I remember that he took part in a similar beating once again.

One day in the afternoon, I cannot remember the exact date, about ten Muslim soldiers came to our cell with several girls - Muslims. Among those soldiers there was one Muslim whom I know by the nickname "Budo" from the village of Dobrak near Skelani. They then beat us constantly for about five and a half hours. Before that, we had to take off all clothes above the waist. They beat us with different object, boots, fists, and so on. At the same time,

they cut us with knives on our bodies, from which I still have visible scars. When they would get tired, they would give us metal rods and order us to beat each other, and while doing it to curse each other Chetnik mother and sing Chetnik songs, and then they would continue beating us. I remember that it was hardest for me when they made me bend over and then they would vigorously kick me in the behind, and from the kicks I would hit my head against the wall or radiator, so I had the impression that my head was splitting.

From those hits, I, as well as others, fainted several times, after which they splashed cold water on us, and once we regained consciousness, they would continue beating us in the same intensity.

The next day after that beating, from the consequences of it, the aforementioned Kojo and Bogdan died right next to me. Mićo was in very serious condition, due to which they transported him to the hospital two days later, where he soon died. The whole

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- 5 -

time, the aforementioned Muslim women were there and laughed and tormented us, and when it got dark, they burned papers so they could see better how they were abusing us.

The aforementioned "Budo" took part in that beating and distinguished himself by brutality. Usually, he came with some girls after the fights in which Muslim soldiers and policemen took part together, and would then continue beating us alone, brutalising us in front of those girls.

During those beatings, my nasal bone and cheekbone under left eye, i.e. the malar bone, were broken more than once. Two ribs on my left side were broken, as well as my upper jaw where my teeth are damaged. I sustained testicular injuries, and now I have a cyst above my left testicle, as well as other permanent injuries in the lower abdomen region, for which I have corresponding medical records.

Because of serious injuries I sustained during the aforementioned abuses, I was on the brink of death and due to that they transferred me to the hospital in Srebrenica in serious condition, where I stayed for about 8 days and I somewhat recovered because I got 57 injections. Together with Ratko Nikolić from Kravica, I was taken from the hospital for exchange on two occasions. The exchange was to be conducted in Kragivode near Skelani, but in both cases, it did not happen. However, on that occasion, we were especially tormented by them threatening us that they would slaughter us, hang us, nail us to a tree, kill us with an axe, and so on. On that

occasion, they hung around my neck some kind of hooks, in the shape of Ottoman hooks, with chains and said that they would hang me on them, and then yanked them suddenly, and in that moment a point of one hook cut my chin and left a permanent scar.

I forgot to say that while abusing me, they often stabbed me with a knife on my body, and on one instance, they tried to cut my right hand off with a knife, so the entire time of my imprisonment I was mostly covered in blood, and there are over 15 visible scars on my body.

Also, please note that in the adjacent room in prison, a group of women were imprisoned - 14 women and two children, of whom I know Živana Trifunović with her daughter from Arapovići near Skelani, a person named Rada from near Zvornik. The women were mostly from Skelani region, I know them by sight, but I cannot remember their names now. From

[signature in Cyrillic: Ivanović Ilija]

- 6 -

time to time, I heard women screaming and thuds, but concerning possible abuse and torment inflicted on them, I cannot say anything actual.

As for the fate of others from my room, except fro aforementioned Koja, Bogdan, and Mića, who, as I mentioned, died from consequences of abuse, I do not know what happened later. Actually, I am familiar with the fact that Ratko Nikolić (exchanged together with me), and Rade Pejčić, who upon Morion ariving to Srebrenica, was taken from Srebrenica together with wounded Muslim casualties, were exchanged, and that, 15 days before me, the handicapped Sttanko, Mican, and Mile were exchanged together with the women. As for the fate of Đukić Milomir, Branko Sekulić, and the two men whose names and surnames I do not know, I am not familiar with what happened later, i.e. if they survived.

We got food once in 24 hours. It consisted of a piece of bread the size of matchbox and two to three spoons of beans or potatoes. The bread was made of oats, rye, and wheat residue, so it was inedible. We got drinking water depending on the will of the guards, and it was often mixed with faeces, due to which I often had abdominal pains, i.e. the abdominal pains were also due to irregular nutrition. The entire time of our imprisonment, we were not allowed to wash our faces or to even minimally maintain hygiene. Sometimes, we were allowed to go to the toilet to relieve ourselves, but we avoided that as much as we could because we

knew that guards were waiting for us in the corridor to beat and batter us. We urinated in the room in one plastic bucket, which was not taken out for three to four days at a time.

I was finally exchanged on 26 February 1993 together with Rtko [sic] Nikolić in Kragivode, and we were exchanged for two alive and two dead Muslim soldiers, and it was conducted after the two attempts I described earlier.

After the exchange, I was lying down for three months basically immobile, and with great difficulty I finally recovered to some extent. Even now I feel the consequences of the aforementioned abuse in prison in Srebrenica, so I must constantly go to medical check-ups and treatments. The consequences I feel especially in my spine, joints of arms and legs, frequent headaches, and numbing of entire body. I am unable to perform any physical activity, thus I am on permanent sick-leave from the company where I am employed.

[signature in Cyrillic: Ivanović Ilija]

- 7 -

Please note that I will subsequently deliver the names of all the persons who were with me in prison and generalities on them, which I wrote down in secret and saved, and which are at captain Ćiro's in Skelani, which I will submit to you as a part of my statement.

That is all I had to say on the previous matters, my statement was loudly dictated and recorded and everything I stated was entered in the record, thus I do not wish to read it, but accept it as my own and sign it.

Ended at 17.45 o'clock.

[signature in Cyrillic: Ivanović Ilija]

Recording clerk:
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Investigative judge:
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