

SERB REPUBLIC OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

State Documenting Center for Research
of War Crimes against the Serb People

Code: 0147

File: A1

WITNESS STATEMENT

Witness Srđa (Ivan) Bulatović from Sarajevo, born 6 August 1958 in Sarajevo, gave the following statement to the State Documenting Center for Research of War Crimes against the Serb People on 28 November 1992 on the matter of (1) the time, location, circumstances and scope of the crimes and violence perpetrated; (2) persons upon whom the crimes and acts of violence were inflicted; (3) persons who participated in perpetrating the crimes and violence; (4) potential witnesses and documentation of the crime.

As early as March 1992, in the entire Sarajevo area, and above all the municipality of Stari Grad, the impending war could be felt in the atmosphere. Then still unarmed groups of young Muslims, especially taxi cab drivers, were following all distinguished Serbs around the town, following their every step, from the restaurants where they typically used to meet, all the way to public gatherings – and they were documenting it. Groups of 15-year-old Muslims were already strolling around City Hall, with green berets on their heads and no longer bothering to hide their weapons. At night, they would pull cars over on hillsides in the city and carry out their own private inspections.

Sarajevo had already become nickname town, where very few people in those groups were known by their real names. Ata, Seljo, Seki, Feko, Juso, Haris Lukovac – a group of 13 Muslims who had sworn to protect Izetbegović for life – they were running around the Urology Clinic unimpeded, where I was employed as a physician – specialist in urology.

The inevitable happened in early April. The hegemonizing at the Clinic could be felt immediately, people no longer worked together like they used to and everyone stuck with their own flock. I personally felt protected in the presence of Dr. Guzina and Dr. Babić, renowned specialists, well-known Serbs from the Urology Clinic. Babić resigned from his position shortly after and went to Pale, and Guzina, even though he was the Chief of the Clinic, did not show up to work until 10 April. He sat at home, in his apartment, wondering whether he should run or stay. When he showed up to work, he was visibly agitated, but he did not speak much... None of our officials gave us clear instructions as to whether we should run or stay.

By 10 April, the Green Berets had occupied the entire Koševo hospital complex. A man called Mema, half-idiot, psychopath, was in charge of the Urology Clinic. He gave

himself the authority to inspect anyone at will, whenever he wanted, however he wanted, and even to run a commentary on the appearance and the characteristics of people to whom he could not hold a candle. I was personally told that I would be killed because of my surname, even though many of those uninvited men had known me from earlier, whether as a doctor or because I had grown up right next to them in the immediate vicinity. Up to 29 April, I went to see my friends at Poljine at will, under the guise of changing the tires on my car or something similar. Our guards at our barricades were extremely trivial at that time, and it all seemed very disorganized. The infamous searches/robberies of apartments started around that time, under the guise of searching for sniper perches. Mass arrests of Serbs started simultaneously, their valuables were confiscated, even entire apartments, for the purposes of accomodating some of their fighters arriving from Sandžak and Kosovo as jihad volunteers. Rapes of Serb women and brutal murders became everyday occurrences. Delinquents reigned supreme, such as Jasko – the most prominent criminal in Koševo, he lived at 48/1 H. Brkića Street; then Hamo Poplata, who arrested hundreds of our innocent pople, and Ibro Poplata, owner of the “Fazan” restaurant – rape specialist. The infamous Sarajevo criminal Đale, along with the aforementioned Poplatas, slaughtered Jovan Milušić, known as Maks, who used to be their neighbor. It is characteristic of Sarajevo that many Muslims led their Serb neighbors to their graces. Basically, they killed their own neighbors just because they were Serbs, or filed false charges and reported made up crimes.

The infamous “Juka Crew” set up a “police station” in the “Nemanja Vlatković” Home for Deaf and Mute Children, and appointed Trta, formerly a waiter at the “Dandi” pizza parlor, as its commander; and another at the Bilijar Club, and at the “Kestenov Hlad” café, located in the home of Dr. Vojka Marković. Gatherings of people from Sandžak and the presence of various types of weapons were spotted at those locatons even before the war. One of the “regular” patrons at these places was Jasmin Nišić, so-called Pišonja, who was known as a Muslim who had joined the Croatian Army in their clashes against the Serbs. They also had a Serb in their ranks – Aco Knežević.

All routes leading out of the city were blocked in May. Telephone lines were also cut. That half-idiot, Mema, was still running around the Clinic. He was later wounded, a gunshot wound directly through the eye. They brought to the clinic the Muslims who were wounded in that crime at Skenderlija. They brought the wounded Colonel Katalina and the also wounded Lieutenant-Colonel Božinovski. They put them all together on the second floor, which was turned into a jail. One of the soldiers, Vitković, from Ilijaš, wounded in the stomach – died after surgery. One of the staff let him drink water, on purpose, certainly, which I presume turned out to be a fatal but deliberate mistake.

In these cases, myself and Professor Šošić acted in accordance with the principles of medical ethics, but we tried to have a Muslim assisting us at all times, so that they

could not accuse us of anything. The hardest cases were always left exclusively to Dr. Guzina. They dragged in a lot of wounded people of all nationalities, and I spent four whole months mostly at the Clinic, I literally lived there.

A heavily wounded Muslim soldier was brought in one day, he had an open injury to the lumbar spine, a severely damaged kidney and left lung. His shrapnel injuries were extremely severe and required emergency medical care. Dr. Guzina and myself immediately diagnosed a severe spinal injury which would have permanent consequences. We did the only thing we could to save his life, but Dr. Hiroš, Dr. Šabanović, and Dr. Bešlić accused us of taking the wrong surgical approach. Fortunately for us, Dr. Aganović assisted us in the surgery. Considering the dire condition that the injured was in when he was admitted – he could have easily succumbed, and then any old fool could have shown up, accused the Serb doctor, and even shot you directly in the head, any time they pleased. For example, the very next day, that unfortunate man's commander, the infamous criminal Ramiz Delalić – Čelo, spit at and slapped Professor Faruk Konjhodžić, who had already taken over the wounded man's continued care, considering his neurosurgical injury to the spine. Only at that point Dr. Guzina and I realized what would have happened to us if the wounded Muslim man had died at our operating table, which could have easily happened, considering the nature of the aforementioned injuries.

I had known Juka Prazina before the war, we were next door neighbors for a while. He held that acquaintance in high regard. It appeared as though I enjoyed certain privileges with him. Thanks to those circumstances, I was able to save many of our people through Juka. I also saved Dr. Guzina, when he was detained at the private jail at Deda Šišić's in the "Zagreb" hotel. At that time, nobody knew whether Dr. Trifko Guzina was even alive, let alone where he was. I used my acquaintance with Jusuf Prazina, who personally located Dr. Guzina, and later, along with Dr. Junuzović, and with the help of Ismet Bajramović – Čelo, took him out of the jail and saved him from a guaranteed execution.

However, without a doubt, Juka's crew executed Serbs en masse, respectable citizens, accusing them of owning weapons, calling in tips, allegedly collaborating with the Chetniks. All of the known mass graves for Serbs, as they were known in Sarajevo, are at their conscience: near the Railway Terminal, in front of the ŽTP hotel in Velešići, between the old cemetery and the Zetra hall, inside the Zetra hall, between the Lav cemetery and the student clinic, at Alipašino Polje, near the Television building...

It is no longer any secret at all that Sarajevo is a mass grave for Serbs. Many of the slaughtered Serbs were doused in gasoline and set on fire, so that they could not be identified.

There is this Serb in Sarajevo, Ratko Mitrović, who has an apartment at 36/2 Kralja Tomislava Street, who worked at the medical examiner's office and has seen many of

our mutilated corpses. Among others, he saw eight members of the Ristović family from Velešić, as a vivid image of the Muslim gangs' brutal mistreatment of unprotected Serbs.

Ratko Mitrović also identified the remains of Professor Doctor Milutin Najdanović, who was the victim of a crime incomprehensible to the civilized man.

I am aware of a case when that Serb at the medical examiner's office received a living man called Čedo and was told to document him as deceased, and when he refused to do so, the Muslim bandits took that poor Čedo outside and returned him to the medical examiner's office about 10 minutes later, saying "Well, you can document him now." Ratko Mitrović should be carefully taken out...

I myself have witnessed the condition in which many of our beaten and mistreated people were brought to the clinic. Rapes of unfortunate Serb women became a fact that very few people cared about in the demented Sarajevo of those days. Brothels where Serb women were used as a reward for Muslim soldiers' basest urges were well known. Their various gangs would accept payment in foreign currency from Serbs in exchange for help in getting out of the city, and then take both the money and their lives from many of them, and the trusting unfortunate Serbs would be declared as missing or killed while trying to escape. Kemo Čelo, once well-known around the town, and now an investigator at their Military Prison – publicly stated that he kills with a shotgun every single Serb that he perceives as emanating the most minuscule amount of Serb pride.

Every single Muslim newspaper, being printed exclusively for propaganda purposes, same as their radio and television – can easily be described as accomplices in all of their crimes, seeing as they praised every form of evil aimed at Serbs, all Serbs, regardless of location, with a staggering amount of spiritual indifference. Their hatred overpowers all of their other capabilities. I was particularly dumbstruck by this in my former Muslim friends, whom I had considered to be of solid intellect. Overnight, they had sunk deep into the spirit of the street mob, which will eventually choke itself in its pathological hatred of Serbs. Someone who had been my peer at the Clinic suddenly has the same opinions as the fanatics of the lowest kind, and, most unfathomable of all, uses the same terminology. That is what the Serb intellectuals in Sarajevo fear more than death...

[handwritten signature.]