

Courtside: Bosanska Krajina Trial

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By Vjera Bogati in The Hague (TU 299, 03-07 February 2003)

The non-Serb residents were ordered to form a column and leave on May 9, 1992, Midho Alic told the court.

He explained that the whole area of Muslim-inhabited villages around Bosanski Novi had been shelled at the beginning of May. That had led 8,000 Muslims searching for refuge in Blagaj Japra.

The prosecution was presenting its case about the alleged ethnic cleansing of the western Bosnian municipality, which became part of the Serb proclaimed Autonomous region of Krajina, ARK, in 1992.

The accused Radoslav Brdjanin was the head of the ARK crisis staff and is accused of genocide against non-Serb population of the region, encompassing all of north-western Bosnia.

In his testimony, Alic told how, on his way out of the village, he saw Bosnian Serb soldiers killing his brother and a neighbour by shooting them in the back.

The men from the column were separated and taken to the sport stadium Malkve, near Bosanski Novi, where more than 700 Muslims and Croat men were detained, guarded by soldiers and a machine gun. "We slept on the concrete floor. There was not enough water. One loaf of bread was divided between eight people," said Alic.

The detainees unsuccessfully attempted to attract the attention of the United Nations peacekeepers stationed on the Croatian-held side of river Una.

Although he was not among the detainees who were interrogated and beaten, Alic claimed that he was once hit by a guard and lost the sight in his left eye as a result.

Another witness – known as BT83 to protect his identity - described the torture he had to endure while detained in a Una hotel and a fire station in Bosanski Novi.

He said he was regularly beaten by the military police, that detainees were fed with their captors' leftovers, which were usually already rotting.

BT83 told the court that he had seen a fellow prisoner, Ismet Muslimovic, severely beaten. The man later died. Many detainees who were taken out during the night simply disappeared, the witness said.

He was released to Croatia in August 1992. When he was reunited with his family, he found out they had had to sign a statement giving up all their property before leaving their homes.

Brdjanin is accused of having a "leading role in the campaign for permanent removal, by force or

intimidation, of the non-Serb population" from the area designated to become the Serbian republic.

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Location: Croatia
Bosnia and
Herzegovina

Focus: International Criminal Tribunal for the former
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