

## **International Justice/ICTY: Jun '08**

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Article investigating the sale of information on mass graves lauded by war crimes justice experts. Tribunal officials and human rights activists say an IWPR article on the unscrupulous practice of selling information on mass grave sites has highlighted a serious problem in the region.

Hague court representative in Bosnia Refik Hodzic said the story, *Bosnian Burial Sites Uncovered for Cash*, was “excellent and deserved to be on front pages of all newspapers in Bosnia”.

He said he thought coverage of this subject was “very, very important for this region”.

“Although I am familiar with the phenomenon of finding mass graves through people who request money for that information, this article gave me a better insight into that problem,” he said.

“The article confirmed some things I already knew, but also shed more light on certain aspects of that issue that were new to me.”

Srdjan Dizdarevic from the Helsinki Committee for Human rights in Bosnia said the report highlighted a serious problem in Bosnian society.

“It is clear that there is no political will in Bosnia to deal with this very painful issue, and when state authorities and politicians are not doing their job, war profiteers have a lot of space for manoeuvring,” he said.

“It is tragic that 13 years after the war, some people still benefit from the consequences of that war – including those who sell information on burial sites – and this article perfectly illustrates that.”

Bosnian Croat liaison officer for the tribunal Goran Mihaljevic suggested introducing tough penalties for the unscrupulous practice.

“People who sell information on burial sites should be prosecuted, or at least told that criminal charges will be brought against them, if they don’t provide that information without asking anything in return,” he said.

“In some instances, those who have that information were, in fact, personally involved in burying victims. In my opinion, all those who try to profit from someone else’s tragedy are dogs of war, regardless of how they obtained that information.”

Another article published in June, *Seselj Party Accused of Witness Intimidation*, which investigated allegations that Serbian Radical Party, SRS, leader Vojislav Seselj is pressuring prosecution witnesses to testify for the defence, was welcomed by local rights activists.

Dalida Demirovic, project manager of the Mostar-based NGO Centres for Civil Initiatives, CII, said, "I think it is very important to inform public about war crimes, especially through investigative journalism."

She added that this was especially important in the case of Seselj, currently being tried in The Hague, as most media reporting focuses on his behaviour in court, rather than on details of the case itself.

"Seselj's case is quite present in the media, but the general impression is that he derides the tribunal and justice, so articles in which his behavior and intentions are exposed are necessary to balance things out," said Demirovic.

"Articles that are written in a professional and fair manner, such as this one, can significantly contribute to the process of transitional justice and facing the past."

Merdijana Sadovic is IWPR International Justice/ICTY programme manager.

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