

Ovčara Survivor Recalls Day of Massacre

Author: [Goran Jungvirth](#)

Witness said victims were tortured before being taken on off for execution.

One of only seven survivors of the Ovčara massacre this week gave testimony in the trial of three former Yugoslav People's Army, JNA, officers on charges relating to the execution of Croats evacuated from Vukovar hospital.

Dragutin Berghofer, 66, a Vukovar citizen, nicknamed Beli (White), testified this week as a prosecution witness in the trial of Mile Mrkšić and his subordinates Veselin Šljivančanin and Miroslav Radić, who are accused of responsibility for the killings of at least 264 Croats taken from Vukovar Hospital to nearby Ovčara farm on November 20, 1991.

Berghofer described how around 350 prisoners had been taken out of the hospital and were first were driven to the JNA barracks where, he said, brutal mistreatment and torture began straight away.

After couple of hours, around 270 of them were taken to Ovčara. According to the witness, they were all cruelly beaten. "When they beat me, tears came to my eyes, my knees were shaking, blood was dripping from my right side," he told the court.

Berghofer said he was saved by his son's friend, a Serbian soldier Goran Ivanović. Along with six other men, he was brought back to Vukovar by a JNA military vehicle.

"Those who stayed are no more. There were from the age of sixteen to seventy years," said the witness as he started to read the names of 32 victims he knew and had seen for the last time at Ovčara.

Berghofer also mentioned loss of his common-law wife, who was killed by JNA shelling during the three months of bombardment at Vukovar, and his daughter who he said had been kidnapped by a local Serb.

The witness said he and the other prisoners were taken to Sremska Mitrovica prison in Serbia, where they ate for the first time in three days. But their general situation was not better. "I don't know where it was more terrible - in Ovčara or Sremska Mitrovica," said the witness when speaking about his treatment in the Serbian prison.

Mrkšić's defence counsel Miroslav Vasić tried to undermine the credibility of the witness by pointing out minor discrepancies between his current testimony and that he gave at an earlier trial in The Hague of the former Serbian mayor of Vukovar, Slavko Dokmanović, in 1996 and in another Vukovar-related trial in Belgrade in 2004.

Vasić also pressed the witness to support the defence argument that Croatian military men had been hiding in the hospital and they were the ones taken out by the JNA.

"I don't deny that there were, among the young men, some defenders of Vukovar too...but I saw very many badly wounded there too," replied Berghofer.

Radic's defence counsel, Borivoje Borovic, repeatedly accused Berghofer of lying, until Judge Kevin Parker intervened and warned him sharply.

The trial continues next week with a new witness.

Goran Jungvirth is an IWPR reporter in The Hague.

Location: Serbia

Topic: Courtside

Source URL: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/ovcara-survivor-recalls-day-massacre>