

WITNESS STATEMENT

My name is Bozo Susa. I was born in Croatia, Kolasac, Knin municipality. I currently live in Australia whose citizen I have become.

By May 1991, I resided in Biograd, near Zadar, in the house of my wife. I was employed with the construction company "Jadran" in Zadar, where I worked as a carpenter. I even built a family home in that city, and my wife and I intended to live there. Nevertheless, when I came to work one day, I was greeted by three men carrying rifles, who told me I was no longer welcome and I had no business there. They ordered me to leave or else I would be killed by them. I knew these people. They were Croats from the place called St. Filip Jakov, near Biograd. In those days, as a Serb, I received various phone threats and provocations. Everything that had anything to do with Serbian identity, such as kiosks selling newspapers from Serbia, shops and restaurants owned by Serbs, were all demolished or destroyed. My son had suffered severe psychological trauma because of it. And I was never involved in politics nor had I been a member of any political party. On 26 May 1991, I was sacked from the construction company "Jadran". Then, I moved with my family to Kolasac, into the house of my father and from there, we moved in 1992 to Knin, to Marici neighbourhood, near the Catholic Church of St. Jacob. We lived in the house previously left by a Croat. Later on, we traced that man and reached an agreement with him that he should move in with his family into our house in Zadar and to regulate this arrangement legally after the war ended and the hostilities ceased.

I was conscripted by the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) on 31 June 1991. I served as a driver in the scouts unit belonging to the Knin Corps. Later on, the Serb Krajina Army was formed and I remained to serve in it.

When the operation "Storm" was launched on 4 August 1995, I happened to be at home with my family as I was on a short leave. I had no previous information or warning from my superior officers that the attack was incoming. It came as a complete surprise to me. The attack began by relentless shelling of Knin, on the morning of 4 August. They targeted military barracks, police station, JNA centre, railway station, but also the town's residential quarters. All the suburbs other than Marici were shelled, because this estate was inhabited predominantly by Croats and they knew that owners of these houses would return some day. That day, very many shells fell on Knin, but I can't tell exactly how many. That same day, 4 August, no one fired back from Knin in response to the attack, not a single bullet was fired.

When the shells started to fall on us, I took my family and some two dozen neighbours, including seven or eight children to my basement. Then I went out to watch the shelling. That area was on a hill and I could see the rest of the city very well. That same morning, around 9 or 10 o'clock, massive convoys of civilian refugees coming from all directions descended on Knin. Residents of entire villages came from the direction of Drnis, Vrlika and Strmica. These convoys had to pass through Knin under intense shelling on their way to Kistanja and the place called Srb. I gathered from the direction where detonations and explosions were heard and seen that even the roads these convoys had taken, were shelled.

In the evening, somewhat after 8 o'clock, when the shelling died down, I took all the people from the shelter out to the main road where I stopped a UN vehicle. They all jumped into the vehicle and were driven to a big house owned by Zivko Saric, situated below the hospital here

UN troops were stationed. They all thought they would be safer there. I was the only one who went back, intending to rejoin my unit the next morning, on 5 August.

However, as I was about to leave around 8 a.m., I saw a MIG-21 aircraft with Croatian insignia attacking Slavko Rodic barracks, from where one of our howitzers previously targeted the Croatian posts. The aircraft unloaded its deadly cargo and flew back, and the howitzer was heard again. After a short while, I saw from the hill the Croatian Army entering Knin from Strmica via Crvena zemlja. I watched it from an orchard, where I was hidden. They moved along the main road. The tanks were followed by infantry soldiers wearing camouflage uniforms. They had no caps on and some of them wore headscarves. This unit, which came to Knin, was the Seventh Guard Brigade of Varazdin, known as the Pumas. That was what I found out later on from some of their soldiers who happened to be captured together with me. I saw an officer leading the infantry column. His head was shaven. I heard him issue this order: "Shoot them all at random!" The infantry continued its movement and when they were about 50 metres away from the orchard where I took shelter, the Croatian soldiers fired at, and killed some 15 elderly people. Half of these people were women. They fled on two small tractors and must have lost their bearings before that. They stood aside to let the infantry go through. The spot was by St. Jacob's Church. The soldiers killed them with several bursts of gunfire. I saw people fall from their tractors. After an initial burst of fire I heard women scream. They begged soldiers, as they lay wounded, to spare their lives saying: "Don't shoot us dead, children!" They took no pity on them and finished them off. My guess was that about ten soldiers fired at them, although it was difficult to say for certain, because there were many Croatian soldiers around who blocked my vision. I had weapons with me, but I didn't fire any shot. Because I was sure they would kill me instantly. I don't know the whereabouts of these unfortunate people.

Immediately after this incident, about 250 metres down the spot where 15 refugees were killed, there emerged a young man, aged between 20 and 25. He emerged with his arms up in the air, and he wore an RSK Army uniform. I could not hear what he told them, but he probably surrendered himself. I saw a Croatian soldier or an officer coming up to him and killing him on the spot. I saw the Croatian soldier put the pistol to the young man's temple. He only fired a single bullet. Later on, while I was detained, I heard that the Croatian Army killed all the uniformed personnel that they came across.

Having seen these killings, I ran away. I ran to the west through the vineyard near my home and through the maize field, all the way to some drain canals used as protection against spring flooding. These canals were surrounded by the forest. I hid there for the next six days. I found two more fugitives there. Their names were Dusan Pekic and his son-in-law Savo Zezelj. Unlike me, who was in uniform, they wore civilian clothes. We sheltered in Raskovic field, in the canals and maize fields, to the west of northern barracks and the railway line. From there I watched Croatian soldiers looting and torching houses in and around Knin. Already in the evening of 5 August, I saw several houses burning in Knin. Moreover, I saw four or five houses on fire in the village of Raskovici, on the other side of the field where I was hidden. The fires were started by Croatian soldiers in uniforms. Over the next few days of my hiding, I was able to see that some twenty houses were burned down in the village of Raskovic and the same number of houses around northern barracks, as well. Croatian soldiers killed dogs and chased livestock. I saw them enter houses, wearing weapons. From time to time, I heard bursts of automatic gunfire and screams of people in Raskovici. Military trucks were loaded with furniture and driven away. At dusk, on 7 August, Pekic and I came closer to the courtyards in parts of Knin called Kalati and Sinobade, in order to pick some tomatoes and

cucumbers. Then we saw Croatian soldiers loading dead human bodies and animal carcasses onto trucks. The dead bodies I saw there were clad in civilian clothes.

I had no information about the whereabouts of my family and we wandered about the place, on our way to Bosnia, looking for shelter. Savo Zezelj went back to his home at night, bringing back some food and water. One night, he even brought me some civilian clothes. Immediately after that, I got back to the house where I lived. It was ransacked and I found that electrical goods had been stolen. I let the livestock and pigs out of their enclosures, because their cries were unbearable to listen to. No one had been feeding them for a long time. After that, I returned to my hiding place.

Pekic and I decided to surrender on 11 August. Zezelj had left us the day before. We had a transistor with us on which we heard that 800 Serbs were sheltering at the UN compound. I told him we should contact the Red Cross because we have never done anyone anything wrong. I neither killed nor expelled anyone. Tudjman called on all people who had not blooded their hands to remain behind. Thus, on 11 August, around 8 a.m., we were headed to the International Red Cross building in the centre of Knin, in the suburb called Desici. On our way there, we ran across some Croatian soldiers and civilians. We passed them by without any problem, because they had no idea we were Serbs. Overturned refugee tractors and horse-drawn carts damaged by shells were still across the road. I also saw road workers filling the gaping holes on the road punctuated by the impact of shells.

We met two employees and one interpreter at the International Red Cross building. We asked for their protection. The two women employees registered us and then called two Croatian military policemen (MP) to take us over. They took us to the Senjak barracks housing the 72nd MP combat unit from Lora in Split. There, they first tore up our ICRC registration cards and started mistreating and beating us all day long. Initially, they forced us to rub the floors for two hours, while the MPs were beating us with bats and shovel handles. They put a ram's bell around my neck and asked me to bleat, then to bray like a donkey and bark like a dog. They even took a picture of me with the bell. They were beating us all the time. As I knelt down like that, an MP kicked me with his boot across my mouth, breaking my tooth. The other MP broke the handle of the broom against my head. The third one put a knife to my eyes, threatening to slit my throat over night. They beat us with clubs across the back intending to make bruises shaped like the prison bars. Their beatings left me with two broken ribs on my right-hand side and contusion of two of my ribs on the left-hand side. For a month after that, I urinated blood and my left testicle was swollen and looked like a fist. Over the next two months I was unable to stand up without someone's support. About 40 MPs took turns in beating us. I remembered the nicknames of some of them: Splico, the Baker, Imota. The officers did not beat us. I heard them tell their inferiors not to beat us across the face. They knew we had been registered by the ICRC. It was only for this reason that we escaped death. We asked for water, but were not given any. The first time that I got some water was from a civilian policeman, at 1 a.m. He was a schoolmate of one of my cousins.

The next day, we were moved to Zadar, to the Mocire sports stadium. We were interrogated there and given food for the first time. There, I was seen by a doctor who examined me because my condition was very bad as a result of the beatings. From there, I was transferred to a prison in Zadar. While I was there, I was beaten on a daily basis, with a police baton, on my palms by the guard named Mirko Pilipovic. He and another guard named Jurjevic forced some prisoners to have oral sex while in shower. I saw this with my own eyes.

I shared the cell with Milan Jovic. The guards beat him a lot. He was forced to say that even he was a guard himself at the Knin prison, where he beat Croatian prisoners, which was not true. One day, they took him to identify the bodies of his uncle and his uncle's son. The very same evening he said good-bye to me when we went to sleep. He took out a belt from someone's trousers and hanged himself in the cell toilette. He tied the belt to the ventilation bar. It was not before the morning that we found his body. This incident occurred sometime in September.

On 31 August, I was brought before the military investigating judge, by the name of Branko Brkic, and on 16 October, I was delivered an indictment charging me with deportations of the civilian population, separatism, etc. Three days later, I was moved to the prison in Split. Once in Split's prison of Bilice, I was constantly beaten and maltreated all the way to the beginning of 1996 when this treatment ceased. We were beaten by guards Marjan Rasic, Zoran Kaselj, Bajic, Mandaric and a certain Ljubo. The prison warden was Fihomir Jakelic who must have heard from his office when they were beating us and forcing us to sing Ustasha and Chetnik songs. Vlado Nikolic was in command of the guards who slapped prisoners on the face, upon their admission. We were particularly severely beaten up on All Saints Day, on 1 November 1995, around 10 p.m. They beat us with clubs; they kicked and punched us. Until the New Year's Day I slept on the floor with ten other prisoners.

Sometime in November 1995, I was interrogated by the investigators of SIS, a kind of state security agency. All this happened at a location outside Split. During the hearing there, I was subjected to torture by electric shocks. They tied the cables of a field telephone to my handcuffed hands and electrocuted me. That was worse than all the beatings I had to endure. I told them everything I knew, but they insisted that I tell them the whereabouts and escort of Ratko Mladic, which as an ordinary soldier I had no way of knowing. When I told them that I did not know, they electrocuted me. I had a feeling that my lungs would explode. It was unbearable. I was in and out of consciousness and the investigators poured buckets of water over me. There were five of them. When the handcuffs broke as a result of the electric shock, at one point, they tied the cables high on my upper arm muscles. I also heard from other prisoners that they too were tortured in the same way and that cables were tied even to their ears.

On 5 October 1996, I received the decision on my amnesty and on 17 October I came to Yugoslavia. Previously, I was asked if I wished to remain in Croatia. My father's house was burnt down on 5 or 6 August 1995 during the operation "Storm" and, of my house in Zadar, which was under construction, there remained only bare walls: its interior was completely looted. I was sure that the offer was false. I knew that Croats didn't want us Serbs to remain in Croatia. Some of the amnestied people were returned to prison after eight days. We could learn from newspapers about the conditions outside. The remaining Serbs had been massacred in three villages and the three suspects of this crime were imprisoned in our jail. Due to lack of evidence, they were released before us.

I still have health problems that I believe are the consequence of torture I was subjected to. Veritas and then ICTY investigators took evidence from me on all these events in 1996. However, I was not a witness at the trial of Ante Gotovina.

I have given this statement to the Agent of Serbia before the International Court of Justice and I agree to appear as witness in the proceedings before this Court. I have read the text of the statement and I fully accept it as my own.

23 May 2012

Signed by (signature)
