

STATEMENT

1. My name is Jela Ugarkovic. I was born in the village of Komic, municipality of Titova Korenica, Croatia. I now live in Denmark. I left my family home in 1974 when I started working in Zagreb, first at Unitas concern factory and later on at the company Rade Koncar, as a financial officer. I was employed there until March 1991 when I was, along with thousands of other people, laid off. At the outbreak of the conflict, in 1990-1991, there was a growing tension between Serbs and Croats. I was the victim of certain provocations by Croats in that period, but I never reacted to them and never had any problems.

2. In September 1991, I left Zagreb for a two-week visit to my parents in the village of Komic to help them pickle food for the winter. My mother's spine was in a very bad condition due to years of hard farm work, and my father was already an old man. It was more and more difficult for my father to work as one of his legs was shorter than the other being disabled in World War II. So, it was difficult for him to move. Komic is a village situated on a very rough terrain, winters are extremely cold and the soil is barren. Bearing in mind that Komic was an old village, with less and less people living in it, where it was very hard to live off land, my parents sold out, a year before my visit, almost all the cattle that used to be big in number because it was predominantly a cattle-breeding region. As my brother, sister and I could not visit them frequently, we told them to sell the majority of livestock, although it was hard for them to accept it. Some houses in the village had electricity but ours did not. And there was no phone in the village, either. For all these reasons, I stayed with them because had no heart to leave them like that. I started to work on the farm to make it a bit better. From then on, I was with my parents. So, I found myself in my native village of Komic when the operation "Storm" was launched.

3. The village of Komic was in the hinterland and we experienced not much of the fighting or shelling. But, the 1991-1995 conflict was a period particularly hard on us. The villagers had to struggle to survive and make ends meet, on a daily basis. Males born after 1947 were called up.

4. In the early morning on 4 August 1995, at about 4 a.m., my father woke me up and I could hear shelling in the distance. My father said that Croats were coming. I tried to calm him saying that it was certainly our Army doing exercises. But, during the day I heard it on the radio that the Croats began the attack, and I heard Tudjman's speech. He called on Serbs to stay where they were and promised nothing would happen to us. Among the other reasons, I stayed in the village because I believed in what he had said. So, I went on working around the house but in the afternoon, when I came out to tender our cows, I saw a convoy of tractors with farmers on the road headed eastwards, towards the main road and Ondico. The village of Komic had two roads, one was the Udbina-Gracac near Ondico to the west via Lastarica leading to the centre of Komic and it was a macadam road, and the other was paved leading from Udbina via Opalic to the village center. Houses and farms in Komic were scattered along the road and on the slopes of a hill to the south of the village.

5. I approached one of the tractors in the convoy asking what was going on and the driver told me to run away as the Croatian forces were coming. I had dinner with my parents and we did not talk much over it but we stayed on. Nevertheless, my father told me to sleep outside, and I slept in a grove, because he was afraid something could happen to me, as he survived previous wars. He wanted the Croatian soldiers not to find me if they came to the house.

6. On the morning of Saturday 5 August, I woke up early again, and again I heard gunshots. Around 5 o'clock in the morning I saw a neighbor from Ploce driving a tractor, who told me he was leaving and I saw that he cut his animals loose and left them all around. We listened to the news on the radio by using transistors; neighbors use to gather around 1 p.m. to listen to the news. The only news that we heard were from the Croatian battlefield; the news were of Croatian victory with no losses and the Serbs were told to stay.

7. That day our neighbor Petar Lavrnjic came and told us that he had been told by other neighbors to evacuate my parents and me. But, even then we did not want to leave our house. In fact, my father said that I was young and that I should go, but I refused. A little after the noon on that day, 5 August, almost all remaining residents left the village. The vast majority of the population, about 150 residents, left the village, and only elderly stayed behind. Then, ~~my father asked me to check who else stayed in the village. I started looking at the upper end~~ of the village and I found only old and frail people who remained in their homes as, for example, Petar who was 60 years old and his mother Sava, who was over 90. (I think their last name was Lavrnjic or Momcilovic). I also found Stoja whose last name was Ostojic, I think, aged about 70. There were a few young people who remained behind, those who were looking for their parents, like Radovan Diklic who was looking for his father and who told me that he saw a few elderly women in their homes.

8. During that period, before the Croatian army entered our village, I remember hearing a detonation, I think it was from a tank shell, and saw a house on fire in Ondice. Later on, as I was passing by, I saw that the burnt-out building was a school.

9. The Croatian army entered the village on 12 August. I was in my garden and heard my dog barking. And then I saw something in the distance. I hid and soon saw an approaching column of soldiers in tanks, armored vehicles and a truck, with a lot of soldiers in the vehicles. They wore dark green uniforms and as I recall had black berets on. I knew they were Croats because the vehicles had checker-board license plates which were their symbols. The army kept moving towards the village along the unpaved road, and soon I saw a smoke coming from a nearby house (later in the evening my dad said that it was the burnt-out house of Petar Lavrnjic and his mother Sava). It was the first house in the village. At the same time, I heard the shooting in the village of Poljice as well as loud explosions from the houses in the neighborhood.

10. When the shooting stopped, I ran to find my father. I stood at the edge of the forest and near our house I saw soldiers, actually only their legs, because I hid myself very close by among the trees. So I did not dare come any closer for fear they might see me. I saw the soldiers descending downhill and surrounding our summer kitchen. The distance between the slope at the edge of the forest where I was hidden and the summer kitchen was about 15 meters. By the way, my mother Marija was constantly lying in the summer kitchen bed-ridden, where I fed her and changed her clothes.

The summer kitchen was built half of timber and half of stone, and was separated from our main house, which was entirely stone built and was in the same yard. Two soldiers entered the house from one side and two from the other. I froze and hid among the trees. They entered all the rooms and the big barn and hayloft. Shortly after, I heard a soldier say "Guys, we've set everything on fire, let's go," and the soldiers left.

11. I waited a bit and then ran to our house, thinking that I could save my mother but it was already too late. The summer kitchen roof had caved in and totally collapsed. In a matter of seconds everything was a ball of fire as they torched all the rooms. I heard the animals, chickens and hens and a calf. I will never forget that moment.

12. I also saw a group of soldiers enter the house of my late uncle in the same manner; they set fire to the house and the barn and headed towards Ondici. At one point, completely beside myself, I came out into the open and shouted to the soldiers to kill me, as well. I do not know if they saw me; probably not. I think the same soldiers who burned down our house were those who had previously torched Poljice, because they came to our house through the woods from that direction.

13. ~~The next day, I saw carcasses of dead livestock all over the place. As I said that livestock farming was the source of income in the village, and that some families had up to 20 cows, that scene was awful. There were a lot of dead horses and poultry. In the evening as it grew darker, I met with my father who was hiding on the hill near the house. He just asked me if my mother was burned to death, and we sat there all night long.~~

14. My father asked me to go and see whether there was anyone left alive in Poljice. We knew that probably everyone who was found by Croatian soldiers was murdered. I said I would go only to Tuk which was a hamlet near Poljice. There again, I saw that three whole estates were flattened and I saw a pile of slain animals that were already bloated. When I came back I saw Janja and Sofija Pavlica from Poljice with my father and Sofija had brought some food but I could not swallow a thing.

15. I think that Marinko Lavrnjic reappeared at dusk on 13 August, who used to come occasionally out of the forest where he was hiding. We agreed with the others who were still alive that we would hide in the hills above our houses to avoid being killing. While Marinko and I were hiding on a hill near the house of Stoja Ostojic, we saw people with dogs in the valley and heard some shots but I do not know who these people were and whether anyone was killed because I was far away. I think that on 13 August or thereabouts I went down to my house and in the summer kitchen I found the remains of my mother. I was devastated and screamed out of grief. I put her remains in a frying-pan and Marinko helped me dig a hole in the yard under a plum tree, and there I buried the remains of my mother and placed the pan on top so that my brother and sisters could find it.

16. We spent the following day also in the wood. Actually, we were always outside because we were afraid that the Croats might find us. Around 25 August, I decided to seek help from the Czech UN troops who were stationed in Klapavica. I didn't walk through the front door when I got to their base but I jumped over the wire fence and talked to the Czech soldiers. Then, when they called their commander, I told him that there were around 20 people in the woods, and so an evacuation was agreed for the next day. UNPROFOR soldiers found 18 people in my village and Poljice; I think it was the end of August.

17. The remains of my mother were buried by my sister and brother on 10 September 1995. I know that Petar Lavrnjic and his mother Sava Lavrnjic were killed in the village of Komic. I heard this from Dusanka Momcilovic who found their remains in front of their burnt-out family home. Also, six months after the operation "Storm" I was on the crime scene with the representatives of the Helsinki Committee and the corpses of Petar and Sava were still

beneath their house. The two of them still had their clothes on and their bodies had not completely decayed probably because of the cold winter conditions. Both Petar and Sava still had their hands tied. Croatian police who saw that we came prevented us from burying them and said they had to call the investigating judge.

18. Mika Pavlica, who was disabled, was found in/or near the debris of her house and her house was burned down on 12 August, as Stoja Ostojic told me. I heard from Pero Mrkalj of the Helsinki Committee that Staka Curcic was also found dead in the garden of her house and that Borka Opacic, who was deaf-mute and for whom I know survived 12 August, when most people were killed, has not been seen since September 1995.

19. In Poljice, Rade Sunajko was found dead at the doorstep of his birth house, and his wife Mika Sunajko has not been seen since 12 August 1995, so I believe she was murdered then. I heard from Luka Pavlica from Poljice that Rade was killed and that he gave him burial himself. In the village of Komic which had 89 house numbers (my house number was 88 and my uncle's No. 89), about 80 percent of whole estates were burned down, and particularly the houses that were not right next to the road but rather in the hill. As for the village of Poljice which is a small village with about sixty houses, I think that 70 percent of estates were destroyed and burned.

20. I know for sure that there was no Serbian army in the villages of Komic and in Poljice and I also know that there was no one to defend or put up resistance to the Croatian army.

21. I gave a statement about these events in 1997 to the investigators of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, but after that I did not testify at the trial of Ante Gotovina, because they didn't call me to the stand. I also gave a statement at the police station in Titova Korenica immediately after the operation "Storm".

I have given this statement of my free will to the Serbian legal team before the International Court of Justice and agree to appear in the proceedings before the Court as a witness. I have read the statement and accept it entirely as my own.

In Fredericia, Denmark, on 8 March 2013

Signature: