

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE PROSECUTION
OF PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR SERIOUS VIOLATIONS
OF INTERNATIONAL LAW COMMITTED IN THE TERRITORY
OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA SINCE 1991

WITNESS STATEMENT

WITNESS INFORMATION:

Name: BAŽDAR Armin

Nickname/Alias:

Address:

Date of Birth: 05 July 1977

Gender: Male

Ethnic Origin: Bosniak

Religion: Muslim

Occupation: Current: Police Officer Former: Student

Language(s) Spoken: Bosnian

Language(s) Written: (if different from spoken)

Date(s) of Interview(s): 23 January 1999

Interviewer: Brigitte St Germain

Interpreter: Alma BIČAKČIĆ

Language(s) Used in Interview: BCS

Names of all persons present during interview(s): Brigitte ST GERMAIN, Alma BIČAKČIĆ

Signed: BAŽDAR Armin 23.01.1999. gms/

Armin Baždar

Brigitte St Germain

WITNESS STATEMENT:

On the 23 January 1999, Brigitte St Germain, an investigator with the International Criminal Tribunal of the Former Yugoslavia presented me with my statement in which I made on the 20th February, 1993 to the Ministry of the Interior Security Services Center, Republic of Bosnia Herzegovina in Sarajevo. I have read this statement and acknowledge it to be my own. Its contents are correct and true to the best of my knowledge and recollection. The only changes I have made are three corrections in names of places. I have signed and dated each page of my statement acknowledging its authenticity.

My family and I moved to Seljani, which was about 2 kilometers from Rogatica when I was 5 years old. I lived with my mother, father and sister who was four years older than I. My father had worked as a foreman in a carpentry company called "Sjemeć". In 1991 he had an industrial accident at work and lost his arm. He retired to a medical pension. My mother was a housewife. My sister had completed her education and had just started to work as a shop assistant.

I'm not aware of the accurate percentage of the surrounding areas but in my village of Seljani there were about 70% Serbs and 30% Muslim. The population of my village was probably less than 1000 people. Most were employed in Rogatica. Others had small farms and tended to their gardens. Before the war Serbs and Muslims got along well. We went to school together, worked side by side, socialized together. Everything changed in March of 1992.

My family was not politically involved in any parties nor did they have in interest at the time. I was too young at the time to have an interest. 1990 and 1991 I do not recall any military activity in our village of Seljani. I know of a Serb who was mobilized and served in Vukovar, Croatia. He later returned to our village. I only recall seeing soldiers or locals wearing military uniforms in early 1992, not before. I do remember seeing "SDS Party", spray painted on rocks and houses and on the pavement in the area in late 1991 and 1992. There were posters in the school referring to a United and Single Bosnia and I would see that the Serb students had marked SDS across it. They would make comments about SDS or Serbia once in a while. I believe they were reflecting their parent's thoughts. We were children.

My parents began getting concerned on early 1992. They knew the war was going to break out but they decided to stay in the village. Their property was at stake. They decided to wait and see what would happen. People were concerned, but things were still quiet around our village.

CB
B. A.

Brigitte St Germain

I personally saw the Serbs carrying automatic weapons in my village. It was common knowledge that the Serbs were being distributed weapons at night but no one knew where or how at the time. The Muslims didn't dare carry their weapons. Some local Serbs were dressed in military uniforms but I didn't see and real soldiers until a short time before the attack of our village.

I saw a JNA military convoy go through my village a few days prior to the attack. The convoy was at least 2 kilometers long and they were transporting heavy artillery weapons. They came from the direction of Pješevica and drove towards the direction of Borike. I know that the JNA had their headquarters in the village of Borike.


There were no military facilities in my village of Seljani. Approximately 20 days before the attack I saw that the Serbs had converted a recreation hall into a barrack. This club was used by the local Serbs who were in uniform, and some strangers as well. There were Serbs from Serbia and also members of the White Eagles. My father saw their insignias and explained them to me.

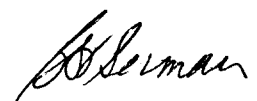
On April 4th, 1992 the hamlet of Ovlagije was shelled. This hamlet is only 500 meters away from my house. The shelling began before noon and lasted approximately one half-hour. There was shelling, shooting and artillery fire. The infantry fired upon our house. There was one man killed during this attack on our village.

During the shelling my family and I had taken shelter in the woods. After a few hours my father spoke with a Serb friend who told him that Muslim men and women had been arrested and taken to Sulejman ČUREVAC's house. The Serbs had selected 18 Muslim men and taken them into the direction of Pješevica. I have listed the names of some of these men taken away by the Serbs on my previous statement dated the 20 February 1993. My father had gone to the house where the Muslims were held and was explained what happened. These men were only civilians.

These men were from the small hamlet or men that had taken refuge in the area for safety. Many men were captured at this time or had escaped prior to the attack. I will add that in my village and surrounding area there were more women than there were men.

Over the next few days the Serb soldiers came house to house and ordered us to move in with families or other Muslims so that they could control us within a smaller number of houses. The soldiers were wearing camouflage uniforms, they had SDS insignias, berets with SDS badges. They were carrying automatic weapons. I knew most of the Serb soldiers. They were either from the village or the surrounding area. I saw paramilitary known as the "White Eagles" also. Their insignia had two headed eagles. They had red berets on. Some had beards. They were from Serbia. I could tell from their accent.





We were placed under a sort of house arrest over the next four months, until August 1992. The employed were not allowed to go to work. We were only allowed to tend to our animals and tend to our small farms. We had some food but we were not allowed to go purchase any. We were four families living together. We were about 20 people including my father and uncle. Most were children. The Serbs patrolled the area and kept us under control.

Some Muslim houses were set on fire during this time from May to August 1992. Our village did not have a Mosque but the two in Rogatica were destroyed.

On 4 August, 1992 three local Serb soldiers came to our house and said that they were expecting an attack from the Territorial Defense. The Serbs viewed the Territorial Defense as being Muslim offensive only. The soldiers told us that we were to be taken to a high school facility in Rogatica for our own safety. They also told us that Serb families would also be transferred to the school. We were placed in a mini bus and taken group by group to the high school in Rogatica.

When we arrived I saw that there were about 90 people there. A few men, mostly women and children. We were all Muslims from my village. I was told and saw that there had been many more Muslims that had been detained there prior to our arrival. The school had three floors and I could see that at one point all the rooms in the school had been filled with prisoners.

We spent the night there. I heard cries and screams from girls or women during the night. I heard the next day that women had been taken out and raped though I didn't see any girls taken out myself. Serb soldiers had come into our room and had flashed their lights into our faces trying to identify girls but they didn't take anyone out. My sister was there, but she was beside my father and she had sort of disguised herself enough that they never touched her.

Local Serb Soldiers wearing camouflage uniforms with the SDS insignia guarded the school. The next morning members of the White Eagles separated us into two groups. The two groups consisted of women and children in one group, and military aged men in the other. My father was permitted to leave with the women and children because of his arm. They were expelled out of Rogatica. They were loaded onto buses and trucks like cattle and taken to Hreša where they later were exchanged.

I had to stay behind along with my uncle. I was young, only 14, but I was tall. The Serbs thought I was older. Approximately 20 men stayed behind at this time but the Serbs brought others later.

After a few hours we were taken to Rasadnik, a suburb of Rogatica. We were placed in a building that was usually used for cattle exhibitions. The windows were all boarded up. We were placed in two offices with no furniture.

During the ten days there I did not see any political officials, or Military officials. The Serb soldiers did not talk much around us.

B.
B.A.

By: H. Berman

On the third day in Rasadnik, a member of the Civilian Militia arrived at the building. His name was KOVAČEVIĆ. He was searching for anyone from the BAŽDAR family. I identified myself. He put a knife to my throat and said that they had found 2000 bullets under the tub in our house. They wanted me to go to the house and turn over weapons. I tried to get out of it by telling him I didn't know anything about any weapons but he didn't listen. I went with him to our house and found my father's two hunting rifles that he had hidden.

My father had the proper documentation for these weapons but the Serbs didn't care. I turned them over to KOVAČEVIĆ and he then drove me back to the building.

The Serbs forced us into doing forced labor. Some men were taken to other locations to work. I had to clean, do odd jobs, clean streets. I was also ordered to clean Muslim apartments, paint and prepare them for Serbs who were moving into them. I also had to move furniture and belongings out of Muslim apartment and houses into new Serb occupied residences.

On the 15th of August, 1992 had started like any other day. I was preparing an apartment for a lady by the name of Nada. She was a woman who worked at the Post office. She ordered us to remove furniture and replace it with other furniture from a Muslim apartment across the street. We were sent to have lunch, but there were only four portions of food for twelve of us.

A short time after lunch a Serb soldier named Radisav LJUBINAC, nicked named "Pjano" arrived at our work site. He was a mechanic driving the mini bus. He told us that he was delivering orders of Rajko KUŠIĆ. We were to leave our work and go into the mini bus to where the action was. I thought he meant a different work site not military action.

We were taken to Duljevac, which was the front line. This is a place outside Rogatica where the Serbs held their positions. There was a Serb soldier named DŽERIĆ, and the woman named Neda in the mini bus. I don't know why they were there. We got out by the front line near a shelter. I saw about 50 Chetniks; they had beards, long hair and were wearing their particular caps with their Serbia insignias of the two-headed eagles. They had automatic weapons and mortars were all around. There was a truck mounted with an anti aircraft weapon. This weapon is called a Praga.

I saw large empty casings/shells on the ground. I believe they were shells fired from tanks though I didn't see any tanks around.

We were ordered to get out of the mini bus one by one by a Chetnik or Serb soldier. We were then ordered to walk ahead one by one towards the front line. I saw that they were cutting ropes into small pieces. We were ordered to stop. The Serbs then tied our hands behind our back individually. I recognized some of the Serb soldiers within the group. They were Mladen LNU, Mitar LJUBINAC, nick named "Grof" and Boban PLANOJEVIĆ.

We were ordered to stand still. Then a Serb soldier came over one by one and took two or three Muslim men with them. They would place the men in front of themselves and walk towards the front line. I was lucky. I wasn't taken. There were still five or six of us who were left waiting.

A.

B.A.

Božidar

A Serb named "Špiro" LNU, appeared to be in charge. He ordered Serb soldiers around us and made them advance towards the front lines with us. An older Serb neighbor, named Sveto LJUBINAC was near us. One of us asked him what they planned on doing with us. Sveto replied no that they would not kill us.

During this time there was heaving shooting and shelling on the front line. After about ½ hr the group of prisoners came back. I managed to speak with my uncle for a few minutes when they returned. I asked him what had happened and what was going to happen to us. He told me to calm down and told me that we were "finished". He said the Serbs intended to kill us. The Serb soldier named Špiro LNU also came back and he ordered a Serb soldier to take the prisoners again but this time it was in the opposite direction of the front line.

We walked approximately 50 meters along a dirt road and we were taken off the road and we walked out towards a field and ordered to stop there. Špiro LNU addressed the prisoners and asked whether anyone had been injured. Two prisoners identified themselves as having been injured. The two men injured were Mustafa TANKOVIĆ and Hamdija JAŠAREVIĆ. They were later killed in the massacre. Špiro LNU replied, "That's nothing compared to our casualties." He then ordered a Serb soldier towards him and commanded him to shoot us.

The soldier then shot at the front of the line of prisoners, one man at a time, bullet by bullet. Špiro LNU then fired at all of us with a burst of fire. I got shot in the arm and fell down. My Uncle was shot in the chest area and fell over me. I could hear my Uncle's throat fill with blood and gurgle. My Uncle's head was covering my right arm. I was face down on the ground and pretended to be dead. The Serbs walked towards us to see if any of us were still alive, I couldn't see who it was but I felt it. They checked my Uncle and he was shot again in the head. This instantly killed him. The bullet went through his head and into my right arm. I didn't move. My arm felt like it was cut off. I couldn't feel my arm or my two fingers. The bullet had hit the bone. While I was face down I heard a radio conversation take place between Špiro LNU and someone else. The voice asked, "who's shooting?" Špiro replied, "Špiro's shooting". Špiro LNU asked, "who's asking?" The voice replied, "Rajko KUŠIĆ."

The Serb soldiers left the area. After they left I listened to see if I could hear anyone. Everything was quiet so I raised my head to see if anyone was still alive. When I looked up I saw a prisoner was sitting up. His name was Nedžad KAZIĆ. I then heard Serb soldiers talking and approaching us again. They were talking and I heard one Serb say "look there's one sitting!" They had seen him. I then heard a burst of gunfire. The Serbs had killed Nedžad KAZIĆ this time. They yelled at his body "are you still alive now".

14

B. A.

B. A. Surman

These Serbs soldiers left. After some time I looked up again and saw two prisoners sitting up and alive. One was untying the other. Their names were Ago KAPO and Vahudin ČATIĆ. I got up and walked over to Ago and asked him to untie me. I told them that we should run away. Ago KAPO said he would stay there and wait for darkness. Vahudin ČATIĆ was seriously wounded. I don't think he could walk on his own. He had a serious wound on his upper leg. Vahudin then told us to leave him there and run away.

I insisted on leaving together as I thought that the Serbs would come back. Ago KAPO then changed his mind and said, "Yes, your right", he then got up and ran away leaving us behind.

I tried to help Vahudin ČATIĆ. He was not able to walk. I saw another group of Chetniks walking towards us. At this time I realized I had to leave to save myself. I could not help Vahudin. I ran into the woods and found Ago KAPO. He told me that it was better if they were separate, our chances would be better.

We separated. I walked about 18 hours in the woods. I hid along the way. On this night the Serbs did see me and fired at me. I was crawling on my hands and knees. I was lucky enough not to get shot again. I managed to hide myself under leaves. The Serbs never found me. During the night I must have lost consciousness from my wounds. When I awoke, I was exhausted. I told myself that I was going to turn myself into whoever I met, whether they were Serb or Muslim. I didn't care any more. I managed to make it to a Muslim Territorial Defense position. It was in the hill of Jarčen. It had taken me 18hrs to travel three kilometers. It had been night, I was lost and bleeding from both my arms severely. I didn't know whether I was walking towards Serb Territory or Muslim Territory.

In the morning, around 10 am I was found by the Muslim Territorial defense. At first they didn't believe I was a Muslim. They thought I had been sent over by the Serbs. They made me take off my clothes. The Muslim soldiers looked at my naked body. Only then did they believe me to be a Muslim. I was given first aid and they took care of me. I stayed with them for two days.

A Muslim soldier took me to free territory. I stayed with my uncle in Kopači which was near Goražde. My family was in Sarajevo, which was under siege, so I couldn't go there. My wounds healed in ten days. I stayed there for about 2 months. I then was able to leave the Goražde area in a convoy towards Sarajevo, but I couldn't get to where my family was. The dividing line to them was the airport. It was under fire all the time. There was a tunnel to go through but I couldn't get the proper papers to cross. It was only used by UN and for persons and convoys with special permits. Many people attempted to cross the runway to get to Sarajevo but were killed. On the 7th January 1993 I decided to try it myself and was lucky enough to cross it. I then was reunited with my family the following morning.

WITNESS ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This Statement has been read over to me in the Bosnian language and is true to the best of my knowledge and recollection. I have given this Statement voluntarily and am aware that it may be used in legal proceedings before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, and that I may be called to give evidence in public before the Tribunal.

Signed: *Baždar Armin*

Dated: 23 January 1999

INTERPRETER CERTIFICATION

I Alma BIČAKČIĆ, Interpreter, certify that:

1. I am duly qualified and approved by The Registry of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 to interpret from the Bosnian language into the English language and from the English language into the Bosnian language.
2. I have been informed by Armin BAŽDAR, that he speaks and understands the Bosnian language.
3. I have orally translated the above statement from the English language to the Bosnian language in the presence of Armin BAŽDAR, who appeared to have heard and understood my translation of this Statement.
4. Armin BAŽDAR, has acknowledged that the facts and matters set out in his / her Statement, as translated by me, are true to the best of his knowledge and recollection and has accordingly signed his / her signature where indicated.

Dated: 23 January, 1999

Signed: *Armin Baždar*

Baždar Armin *Alma Bičakčić*