

CANTONAL COURT IN TUZLA
Number KI: 247/96

RECORD OF WITNESS INTERVIEW

Compiled on 19 June 2000 before the investigating judge of the Cantonal Court in Tuzla in the criminal proceedings against the accused Radislav KRSTIĆ et al. for the criminal offence under Articles 141 and 142 of the Criminal Code of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

PRESENT:

INVESTIGATING JUDGE
Emin HALILČEVIĆ

Also present at the witness interview:
Cantonal Prosecutor
Defence Counsel:
Accused

COURT CLERK
Majda BOŽIĆ

Present on behalf of the Hague War Crimes Tribunal, Office of the Prosecutor: Dean MANNING, investigator,
Magda KARAGIANNAKIS, lawyer, and
Ašida ZAIMOVIĆ, English language interpreter.

Commenced at 1100 hours.

The witness was advised to tell the truth, that she must not withhold any facts, and was then warned of the consequences of giving false testimony. She was instructed that she was not required to answer individual questions if by so doing it was likely that she would bring upon herself or a close relative the risk of severe disgrace, substantial material damage or criminal prosecution.

The witness gave the following answers to the questions asked:

1. First and last name: Saliha OSMANOVIĆ
2. Father's name: Salih
3. Occupation: housewife
4. Year of birth: 1954
5. Place of birth: Zalužje, Bratunac
6. Place of residence: [REDACTED]
7. Relationship to the accused and the injured party: not related

After this, the witness stated the following as regards the case:

I married Ramo OSMANOVIĆ when I was 19 years of age. We lived in the village of Dobrak, Srebrenica municipality. During our marriage, Ramo and I had two children: son Nermin, born in 1976, and Edin, born in 1977. Ramo and I lived well, we built a large three-storey house, had a lot of land and kept cattle. Ramo was a construction worker, he worked in all the republics of the former Yugoslavia and also abroad. When the war began in 1992, my son Nermin was finishing the first year of

secondary school and my son Edin the eighth year of primary school. Because of the shelling of the village in which we lived, we had to leave immediately the war began and moved to the village of Osat, Srebrenica municipality, where we stayed for four months. We then also had to flee Osat and moved temporarily to Srebrenica. We stayed in Srebrenica until its fall in July 1995. Just before the fall of Srebrenica, on 6 July 1995, my younger son Edin was killed by an aggressor shell. Five days later Srebrenica fell. After Srebrenica fell, on 11 July 1995 my husband Ramo, son Nermin and other men who were in Srebrenica tried to save themselves by going through the woods towards free territory. Together with other people – mostly women and children, but also a lot of men of all ages – I went to Potočari, which is not far from Srebrenica, where the UNPROFOR base was located. We were hoping we'd be protected there. There were a lot of people there and I know that the following day, on 12 July 1995, I was transported in a truck to the village of Tišće, Šekovići municipality. The truck was full of women and children, and there was also an elderly man who could not walk in it. From Tišće we walked to the free territory in Kladanj municipality. While I was in Potočari, I saw General MLADIĆ who had come there. I heard him say, "You might survive, but you might also disappear." When MLADIĆ came there, he first said that the women and children should go towards the buses and trucks so the crowd began moving towards the buses. There the Serbian soldiers separated the men from the women. They didn't allow them to get on the buses or trucks and took them to a house not far from the buses and trucks. I know the house had a ground floor, the ground floor had been finished, but the first floor had not. Only the concrete floor had been constructed on the first floor and there was no roof. They took the men into that house. They took my father-in-law Omer OSMANČEVIĆ, who was then about 60 years of age, there. None of the people who were taken to that house ever returned and there has been no information about my father-in-law to this day. I would be able to recognise that house and I have gone to Srebrenica twice and seen that house. I was there last year and as far as I could see, nobody lives in that house even now. When I reached the free territory, BIS /expansion unknown/ reporters showed me a tape on which I saw my husband Ramo, captured by the Serbian soldiers, calling at the top of his voice to our son Nermin to come down out of the woods to join him. To this day, I have not received any news about my husband Ramo or my son Nermin. They are listed as missing. I presume they were killed, but I feel better when I think that they could turn up one day.

I gave a lengthy statement to Hague Tribunal Investigator Dean MANNING about my life before the war, during the war in Srebrenica until its fall and my life as a refugee. The statement contains six typed pages. Being illiterate, I authenticated each page with /the print of/ my right index finger. I gave the statement in Bosnian and English and I stand by it completely. So I find it difficult to repeat all that.

That is all I have to say. The record was dictated aloud and it contains everything that I have said. I do not request that it be read out to me and I sign it as my statement.

Court Clerk
/signed/

Witness
/signed/

Investigating Judge
/signed/
/stamped/

When I got married I lived with the parents of my husband for four years until we built a house of our own and we lived there with our 2 children. We had a very big house, 3 storeys, we had land, we lived well. We had everything, we had a cow, we had hens, we had a tractor and other farm machines. My husband worked in a Serbian firm, from Belgrade, he worked away a lot and worked in other countries. He brought home a lot of money, we had a good life. He worked all over Yugoslavia constructing things for 2 companies.

My main role before the war was agriculture, the work on the land and looking after the house. My husband, as I have said, worked away a lot and provided the money for the family. When he was at home he would also help to construct houses around the area and to earn more money that way. He would not normally work the land but sometimes he would work the tractor to till the land. My husband was in charge of the household, of the family, he was the one who brought up all the decisions and he was the one we listened to. That the man is the head is the normal way in our village, we can say it was the custom, and in my house it was so.

If my first son Nermin had married he would have moved in with my family, it would depend although if he found work somewhere else then perhaps his wife would go with him.

Some foreigners took me to my house, they were from the television from the BBC and they made a video of what happened at Srebrenica, they took me back last year to my home. I saw that my house was occupied by some Serbs who had repaired some of the damage to the house, which had been caused by fire. I went back to the house because I wanted to find some photographs of my husband and sons. I could not find any, I have very little to remember them by. Before the fall of Srebrenica someone took some video film of Srebrenica and they caught my children on that film. Later on my brother in law gave me some photos from that video of my children. I also have a video made by the BBC which shows my Ramo on the film calling out to my son, Nermin. Other than these things I have nothing left.

When these people took me to our house they asked me if I had any wish and I said I just wanted to see the house and see the grave of my youngest son.

My husband Ramo is missing and my son Nermin is also missing, both from the fall of Srebrenica, my son Edin was killed on 6 July 1995 from a shell fired by the Serbs. I lost everything I ever had. I have told other people what happened at the fall of Srebrenica and I have told the BBC who made the film about what happened. Both my husband and my son left when Srebrenica fell and tried to walk to safety with the other men through the woods. As I said they did not make it.

I arrived at Potocari on the 11th of July 1995 and I think I left early evening on the 12th and eventually was taken to Tisca and made to walk to safe territory. I was taken from Potocari on a truck with other women, I remember the only male on this truck was an old man who couldn't walk, he couldn't walk at all and he was left at Tisca.

When I was in Potocari I saw that the men were being separated from the women and were not allowed to travel with us to safety. I was there and I saw and heard everything, I was there when Mladic said, "you might survive, but you might all disappear". I also heard when the males were killed. I was on the right side and I saw the males taken to a house which was near by, my father in law was with me and he was also separated from me and taken in that house.

Dear Mary.

OSMANOVIC SALHA
18.06.2000

Osmanovic

My father in laws name Omer Osmanovic and he is missing, he was about 60 years old, I'm not sure. They, the Serb were separating men all the time, the soldiers would go amongst us and take men away all the time. This whole time was hell for me, I had lost my youngest son on the 6th of July and Srebrenica fell on the 11th of July. This whole time I was almost out of my mind, I saw these things and I felt these things and it was terrible. The house that the Serb soldiers took the men to was close by to the people, it wasn't a completely finished house, the ground floor was finished. When Mladic arrived he said that the first could go, the women with children could go, so we all moved towards the buses and the trucks this house was near the buses and trucks. We were separated there, the men were directed to the house and the women to the other side, to the buses and trucks.

When we climbed into the trucks I thought they were going to take us to Bratunac and the stadium and I thought they were going to kill all of us there.

I can't remember the colour of the house but I recall that the ground floor was completely finished and that the first floor was not finished, the building I think did not have a roof. There was a top on the next floor but the rest of the house had not been added on yet. This was not the only place where the men were taken to when they were separated.

I can tell you all about what happened at this time but as I said it was hell for me. I can tell all about it if I am asked more.

I went to 4 grades of elementary school and I can read and write, my father died when I was quite young and my mother remained with 5 children and I didn't continue with the education. It was very hard for my mother to raise our family with out my father, I don't think that any one helped her, she was left alone with 5 children. One of my sisters didn't attend school at all. My husband, Ramo finished 8 grades of elementary school and as far as I know he attended some other sort of medium school. We could both read and write. Ramo was more educated than me, it was common for men to have more education than women. I don't know why, I think it depended on the financial means of the family, perhaps they sent to the school also the female children. My 2 sons went to school, when the war started Nermin just finished the 1st grade of medium school, he was 16 years old when the war started. The younger one was just finishing the 8th grade of elementary school.

Before the war was the happiest past of my life because I had my husband and my 2 sons, now I don't need to live anymore. We were a rich family, we had everything. If I knew I was to come and answer these questions I would have brought the photographs of our house, our life, so you could see with your own eyes. I have photographs of my house and the farm which were taken for me by the BBC. I have nothing from before the war, everything remained in the house. Our village was close to the Serbian border and when the shelling started we moved to another village and then to Srebrenica. Everything we had remained in the house. When they first started shelling we were forced to run into the forest and hide there, this was in 1992.

Before the war we were religious, as you can see even now I am dressed in the Muslim way. Our religion was important to us as it was to the rest of the village, I can say some were more religious, some less but we all believed, but it was up to every one what they did or showed with their religion, it was personal.

Dean Tany

OSMANOVIC SALIHA
18.06.2000

Asid Ramovic

The Serb village of Kalimanici was nearby but we got on well together, my children used to pass through that village on the way to school and we never had any problems. We never thought they could start killing us.

I am asked if I would like to go back to my village, I can say that I would like to go back to my house but I am not sure I could stay there, that I would feel safe after all those terrible things that have happened to me. If I went back there I would have to go by myself, I would be by myself. I have no one, only neighbours, I don't know if any one will go back or when.

I am also asked what my life is like now, I live in a house which my brother owns me in [REDACTED]. He lives now in Germany. I live alone there. I get some money, something monthly, I get it because my children are killed and missing, I do not get the pension for my husband. Of course it's not much, it's just for electricity, for the bills, for some food, and that's it. The days are very difficult for me, I do some every day work in side the house, but my life is very difficult.

I cry often. I will never live as I used to live, never again. I have high blood pressure, that's all I have. I did not have any health problems before the war, I don't know if I had high blood pressure in Srebrenica, we didn't go to the doctor or think about such things, at that time we were occupied by the shells that were falling around. I feel terrible sorrow inside of my self, it's very hard for me to see young people walking around and I know that my sons are not here any longer. I don't sleep well and the doctor gave me some drugs.

Everything I had I have lost. I have been asked what do I think is in the future for me, I have no idea, I have nothing.

This house where I live now is the 5th location that I have lived after the fall of Srebrenica. I don't know if I will stay there, it's not my house. My brother lives in Germany and I have heard he wants to sell the house, I just don't know. I don't possess anything. My life doesn't mean anything to me any more, I just move from house to house, I have lost my husband and 2 sons. I have nothing.

On the 18th of June 2000, Investigator Dean MANNING showed me a number of photographs that I recognised as being the same as I saw on the film the BBC showed me. I am able to recognise my husband on a photograph, which is marked 00696307 on the back. My husband is the man in this photograph who has his hands to his mouth. I have seen the film of this and he is calling our son Nermin down from the hills. I know that Ramo was held captive by the Serbs when this film was made, I don't know where the location is. One Serb cursed Ramo and he ordered to Ramo to shout out "to come to the Serbs", that Nermin should come to join them. He is also on the photograph marked on the back 00696321, he is the only man on that photo.

As I said I have a copy of the film which shows my Ramo and I watch it often. I do not see my son Nermin on that film or on the photographs.

I do not know what has happened to my husband and son, they tell me that they are probably dead, maybe it is easier to think that they may return to me one day.

Dean Manning
18 June 2000

Signature: USMANOVIC SALIH

18.06.2000.

Asidz Faimovic

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: OSMANOVIC SALHA

Dated: 18.06.2000.

Dean Mandy
(DEAN MANDY)
ICTY INVESTIGATOR
18 JUNE 2000.

Ando Jambiro

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