

Transcripts of victims' testimonies
Brčko '92: Beyond Reasonable Doubt
5.09.2008, Belgrade

Smajl Musić's Testimony

Even when I speak about this with my own family I become emotional, and of course now it's the same. I hope you don't mind, but I'd like to say to everyone present, whom I'd also like to greet, that I decided to respond to this invitation only because I and my family saw this lady on television...When I saw her last night on TV she looked big, however, she is small, but I must add that she has the heart of a lion. I'd also like you to greet her on my behalf. Thank you. Luckily, I wasn't in a detention camp or other centres in Brčko such as *Luka*, the police station, hospitals, *Laser*, *Partizan Gym*, however, I was in detention from the 1st of May until the 5th of October (1992). Because of everyone present here I will say now when it all started. I apologize to all of those who already know the story. On the 30th of April 1992 that is on the 1st of May 1992 in the early morning, I'd say at exactly ten past five – quarter past five, I was literally thrown out off my bed by an explosion. A bridge had been blown up and I don't know which one exactly because I lived near to all the bridges; a railway bridge, a pedestrian bridge and a regular car bridge which connected [Brčko] to the Republic of Croatia at Gunja. Before I continue, I'd like to add that the pedestrian, car bridge was blown up and the border is in the middle of the River Sava. All the traffic, pedestrian and car traffic, was going over that bridge because the other border crossings were closed, that is, the bridges in Šamac and other places had already been blown up. I had a shop in the vicinity of the bridge, about 100-150 meters from the blown up bridge, the pedestrian bridge which connected us with Croatia, at the town of Gunja. I had 92,000 marks worth of merchandise in the shop. On 22 April I had done the inventory. Of course, I went there right after the explosion in order to see what happened to the merchandise in the shop. I was literally unable to walk on the streets because of all the glass. Of course, just like all the other 44 shops in the mall where my shop was located, some of the windows in my shop had been shattered. I somehow managed to temporarily fix the windows. I personally made sure that the windows were repaired because two windows in my shop had been shattered. That's why I went to *Staklorad*, to get the windows fixed. However, the glass shop was so busy that I wasn't able to get new glass for my windows before the 2nd of May. After that, I went back to my apartment building. On the way back, I saw some soldiers standing around the post office, across from the city pharmacy. They were all armed with rifles and had stockings on their heads; only their eyes could be seen. Of course, I didn't recognize anyone. However, one of my neighbours was there, but it's not important, I mean I'm not going to say his name; maybe on another occasion. He let me go through so I went back to my apartment building. I went back to my apartment building and I was detained in my apartment building until the 14th of July 1992. I call this detention because I was in my personal apartment in the building with 52 apartments. Between 90 and 105 other individuals were also there during this time period, including men, women and children. There were 11 children who needed milk, baby food and so forth. I knew this information because, I must



mention it now, the commander of security in the Tuzla Street and the Solidarity Quarter, by the name of Rajko Mijailović, called me up to the local community office. He sent a member of the security force, guard unit which had already been established, to bring me to the local community office. You cannot imagine how my family was feeling when they called me. I was practically dead in their eyes, yet alive. However, nothing spectacular happened ... but it's hard to talk about that. He gave me a task, since he knew me personally, to write the names of people who live in my apartment building and I found that to be something positive. The list was supposed to contain the names of children, and I told him that there were 11 children that needed to be provided with milk and other necessities. This is truly what happened. After different tortures that took place in my apartment building and I must mention the so-called weekend soldiers who were coming from Serbia to our apartment building. In my opinion they were only robbers. On one occasion, I was going from one apartment to another with a rifle pointed at my back because they allegedly wanted to see who needed food. Actually they were looking for gold. There was also an attempted rape on the first floor of my apartment building. Actually, it happened on the same day at the very end of their tour, after they had been to all the apartments. During the time when they were in our apartment building, the police came, and I knew the two policemen who came, I actually knew all the special police officers who came to our apartment building. The police asked me: "Is everything all right Smajl!" I answered by saying "of course" I had a rifle pointed at my back. However, when all of this was over, there was a rape attempt in the building. I don't know if there was a rape but I personally think that there was no rape because the time they spent in that apartment wasn't long. I didn't ask anyone if they had actually raped someone. During this period of time which we spent without electricity and water, you can only imagine how it was living in such an environment and situation. I lived on the 9th floor. I was drinking coffee at 8 o'clock, it was maybe five past eight, when armed soldiers came inside. Actually, two soldiers in military uniforms came inside and they pointed their rifles at my back and asked me for my documents. Of course, I got up, and since there were 17 persons living in my apartment, women, children and men, they detained all five of us grown up men and took us from my apartment on the 9th floor. The elevators didn't work so we walked downstairs and were then put on a bus. We had no idea where we were going. They then drove us in the direction of Burića Brdo (Burić Hill). There, they gathered other people; mostly men and they told us that we were going to work and that we would soon return. However, we were then transported to the well-known Mištrapović petrol station located in the direction of Bijeljina. We stayed there for five or six hours. I don't know why. We stayed there in the heat. The 14th of July was a very hot day. We had no water or anything else. We were then transported to Bijeljina. Later on we found out that we were actually transported to Batković. On that day, 141 men from the Solidarity apartment building (Burić Brdo-Hill) were transported. More people were initially supposed to be transported but they selected certain people during the five-six hour wait at the Mištrafović petrol station. A bus was already at the location before we arrived and they took all the people from the bus and put them against the wall. They searched them and beat up all of those who had something in their pockets. I don't know why they beat them. I had a small notebook in my pocket with phone numbers and I also



had some schillings and marks. I asked one of the soldiers who was our escort (there were actually two of them in our escort), but I knew one of them because I had seen him in my apartment building before visiting a girl. I asked the soldier to take my notebook and to give it to my family because I was afraid. He actually did that. There is always humanity, even in such situations. This man now works at the post office – Telekom Srpske in Brčko. He didn't do anything great, but his deed was nice because it saved me from being beaten up and my family received the money. After that it was our turn. They took us in and beat us up without any reason. They told us to put our hands in the air in order to fit as many of us as possible into the warehouse where the turnips had been stored. The floor was built out of concrete and I and everyone else slept on the concrete floor for 29 days. People from Vlasenica had been in the warehouse for about a month, maybe more maybe less time, before we came. They were already there when we arrived. Why did I say 29 days? Because 29 days after my arrival at the camp.... allegedly it was only a collection centre, however, people were being beaten up and abused if they only mentioned the word *camp*. The International Red Cross, after several attempts, was allowed to visit the camp, or collection centre. They finally made an agreement with the authorities and the Batković security to come and visit the camp. On the day of the visit, hundreds of us carried hay inside the warehouse in order for them to see that we were sleeping in good conditions and not on the concrete. It actually made me very happy because I felt like I was in a hotel. On that day, nobody has mentioned this before, there were two escape attempts; actually one escape attempt by two persons. They were caught and of course beaten up. We were also abused because of that. On the day when we were registered, there were several International Red Cross teams working. We were told to be in the groups of fifties. I was in a group which was taken out of the building into some other rooms. However, some unknown man was put into our group. Of course we didn't know who he was even though we were told by Major Savić, an intelligence officer, that some men would be put into our groups. He told us to be careful about what we say because our lives would be in jeopardy. The point was that we were not supposed to talk about the killings. After the International Red Cross finished their work, they provided detainees with some papers with the International Red Cross insignia on them in order for detainees to be able to write to their families through the Red Cross. Some people wrote "*we don't have food or we don't have anything to eat*" and so forth and because such statements were forbidden the people who wrote such things and the rest of us were beaten up. When I was out of the warehouse with the group of people I had a personal experience similar to this. Someone in our group asked something in English, the man who had infiltrated our group didn't like that and reported it. We were afterwards taken out of the warehouse again and abused. I didn't see anyone in the detention camp killing anyone with a rifle but some people died due to the lack of medicine. The first man who died was a man by the name of Jukić. He died due to the lack of medicine and adequate health care. The second man who died was a man from Brezovo Polje because he didn't have insulin. A man by the name of Čudić Ekrem went mad and was killed. I didn't personally witness this because I was exchanged. My colleagues told me this. I apologize for mentioning this because probably nobody else from Batković remembers this story. He was probably killed because he asked for something.



Muhamed Čaušević, a boy who lives in Novo Brčko (New Brčko) was in a food line.... on the day when I was exchanged. At the next exchange, I found out that he was killed in the food line. Zečević from Bijeljina and a goldsmith man Smajić died about two meters away from the place where I was lying. I also would like to mention the toilet in the detention camp. It was in the room where we were sleeping. It was actually a 200 litre barrel used for petrol with two handles. It was located only two meters above my head because I was located at the entrance. When it comes to Goran Jelisić, I never saw him in Brčko because I was detained but I did see him once in Batković because he actually introduced himself. He came to look for two detainees called Kević Šefko and Mirsak Dervišević Gula; I think that was his name. I said that I wouldn't mention names but I cannot tell this story if I don't mention these names. That man didn't do anything to me, but I was in the walking area of the camp when he said "look who I brought you". He actually took out the two people I just mentioned. I moved out of the way and continued looking out of curiosity when I saw Vera, a girl from Brčko who was the only registered prostitute in the town before the war. Her brother in law is Goran Jelisić alias Adolf and her daughter is Monika. I don't know what happened afterwards but I only wanted to mention that I have seen him. He was escorted out by the commander of camp's security. His name was Veljo. I think that Velibor is his real name and I think that Ostojić allegedly was his last name. I apologize about these alleged statements. They escorted him out in a nice way. He then pulled himself away. I was close to them. When we heard that the man was Goran we all went into the warehouse. Nobody stayed outside. After that, he came inside and said: "Can you imagine that Muslims are saying that I have killed 3,000 people, in fact, I have only killed several dozens of them". He then said that he had only killed 10 to 20 people. This is what I remember. Soon after these events in the camp I was finally exchanged on the 5th of October, after several attempts. While I was in the camp, my daughter died on the 29th of September. After that, my courageous wife went to the military barracks and I found out about this afterwards. She asked them to bring me in from the camp. She went to see Commandant Milisav. Close to his office was also the office of my neighbour Boško Lomović who was a war reporter for the area of Brčko. He reported for the Novi Sad television station's news at 17:00h and for the Belgrade Television Station. He lived on the 7th floor of the same apartment building where I lived. I lived on the 9th floor. We were very close. We used to play chess together. My wife said that he couldn't believe what had happened either. We don't know if I was brought back from the camp because of him, but he probably contributed to that partially. They brought me, my brother in law and another man whose cousin was also killed on the balcony to the 9th floor. We were late for the funeral on the 30th because I arrived at 6 o'clock. Before we were transported to Brčko from Batković, we were first taken to the military barracks. We stayed there with the duty officer and were waiting for someone. At that time, I was told that my daughter..... My good colleague, a criminal police investigator in the Ministry of Interior Krsto Mihajlović told me that my daughter had died. Since another man by the name of Aco, from Banovići, was with him, he was nice to me. He told me: "Smajl run away if you can". Of course I didn't even think of doing that. How could I do it? Where would I go? The funeral was on the 1st of October and after that I went back to the camp. Citizens, colleagues, friends, mothers and fathers of



detainees heard that I was in the town and they also heard about the death. Some hurried to send clothes and I must now thank Aco, the police officer who wasn't supposed to but still allowed us at the entrance to the warehouse to bring the bags for the detainees. The guards who carried the huge bags wanted to rob them but he didn't allow them and believe me we gave all the stuff to the people whose names were marked on the bags and packages. On the 1st of October, I arrived at the camp at half past five in the afternoon and I was told that they had already moved some detainees to another warehouse where they even installed a black and white TV, after the registration by the International Red Cross. They also told me that they saw footage about my daughter's, brother in law's and neighbour's tragedy on the Novi Sad TV news. They also said that they showed soon afterwards my brother in law's son being transported to Belgrade and that all the electronic and print media recorded the event. He was taken to the Emergency Health Centre in Belgrade and he was even visited by President Ćosić. After Belgrade, he spent several years in Germany with his uncle. I was exchanged on the 5th of October. I wanted to go to my family. My wife and my son stayed in the apartment building. However, they were no longer living on the 9th floor anymore. They now lived on the 1st floor. This was unknown to me at the time; during our transportation from Batkovići to the free territory I only wanted to go home. We were ordered to put our heads between our legs while on the bus. We were also told not to look through the window or to move the curtains. In the town, I first saw the police station building. There used to be a city toilet at the site but it's not there anymore. A new building has been built in its place. After that, the police officers started taking us out. I didn't care for the police officers and I went directly to the police station because I knew all the people there. I went to the toilet. Ljubica Knežević saw me and approached me. She expressed her condolences because we had known each other for a very long time. I quietly asked her if she had a car in order for her to bring my wife and son. She didn't say anything, and for a moment I thought bad things about her even though we were good friends. Soon afterwards, a police officer forcing us to get back on the bus, but I didn't listen to him. After that, I saw my wife and my son. Ljubica brought them to me after all. I'd like to thank her a lot again. Why? Because I listened to the woman and didn't go to the apartment bar rather made a final decision to go to the free territory which was Rahić Gornji. Before I got on the bus, besides the warning, my final decision was to go to the free territory. The men driving by in a police car approached me and greeted me. I must say that both men were Serbs. They expressed their condolences. I then asked them: "how safe is it for me to stay". He told me "say good bye and run". Well Nataša that would be all. Thank you for letting me say this and believe me I didn't think I'd be able to do it. I apologize to all of you if my speech wasn't systematic, parts were chronological. I wasn't able to write it. I can never write it down. All of you who do this kind of work can feel free to call me at any time of day or night and we can talk about this in more detail. This was only a part of what I have to say. Thank you very much.

