

**Case: Branko Grujić *et al* – ‘Zvornik’**  
**War Crimes Chamber**  
**Belgrade District Court, Republic of Serbia**  
**Case number: KV.5/05**

**Trial Chamber:** Tatjana Vuković, Trial Chamber President, Vesko Krstajić, Judge, Trial Chamber Member, Olivera Anđelković, Judge, Trial Chamber Member

**War Crimes Prosecutor:** Milan Petrović

Accused: Branko Grujić, Branko Popović, Dragan Slavković a.k.a. Toro, Ivan Korać a.k.a. Zoks, Siniša Filipović a.k.a. Lopov, and Dragutin Dragičević a.k.a. Bosanac

Report: Nataša Kandić, Executive Director of the Humanitarian Law Centre (HLC), and Dragoljub Todorović, Attorney, victims representatives

### **1 February 2006**

#### **Examination of witness Amir Jakupović**

The witness lived in Kozluk where he owned a store. He said that the villagers lived as good neighbours to one another until 8 April. After that date the Bosniaks were no longer able to leave the village owing to barricades thrown up by Serb soldiers, police and territorials blocking the roads to Bijeljina, Janja, and Zvornik. All of those manning them were in uniform. They were residents of neighbouring villages, mostly reserve policemen and territorials. The witness knew most of them.

Because he owned a store, he had a permit to move about issued by Major Pejić. He used his lorry to carry juice, mineral water and eggs from farms in Kozluk to the Serb forces' headquarters at the Standard company.

The witness knew Grujić and Popović and identified them in the courtroom.

The witness was a member of the Bosniak Crisis Headquarters under Fadil Banjanović.

From 1 May to 26 June 1992 the situation in Kozluk was unbearable, with tanks entering the village and soldiers shooting at the roofs.

#### **The expulsion from Kozluk**

About 5 a.m. on 26 June shooting broke out and lasted an hour. The witness was at the Crisis Headquarters at the time. A Serb policeman arrived about 8 o'clock and said that Fadil Banjanović was to report at the Kozluk police station in 15 minutes. Since Banjanović did not sleep at home, the witness went out to fetch him and brought him to the Staff Headquarters office, where Banjanović took the exercise-books with the names of the Kozluk residents. Neither knew why the police wanted to see them. Near the police station they saw men in army

uniforms as well as Branko Grujić and Jovo Mijatović. Banjanović went inside with them while the witness stayed outside. The witness said, 'Fadil went in and I stayed behind. Then I took fright and went inside too. I heard Grujić order or say to Fadil that he no longer guaranteed our security and that we were to move out within an hour.' According to the witness, deputy Jovo Mijatović and several soldiers whom he did not know were present in the room when Prime Minister Grujić uttered those words. At that, the witness walked out and Banjanović stayed a few more minutes.

The witness said that 'the buses arrived after twenty minutes and we were told to inform the people within an hour and to pack up.' Banjanović drove through the village with a megaphone in his hand, telling the residents that they are to leave and to assemble in the communal yard. In the yard, everybody had to approach a table and affix his signature to a list. The witness saw the list in Loznica and noticed that everybody had undersigned a text stating that they were moving out of Kozluk of their own free will and leaving all their property to the municipality. On signing the list, the villagers boarded the buses of the Drina trans company from Zvornik and the lorries of the Vihor transport company from Karakaj and set out for Serbia under police escort. In their company were the Bosniaks from Skočić, a small number from Šepak, and some from Divič who happened to be in Kozluk at the time.

The witness was adamant that the departure was not voluntary, that it had been ordered, and that it had followed the looting of houses, throwing of hand-grenades, seizing of cars, and abuse and abduction of women. The witness said he was allowed to use his car (he had two), load his belongings, take his family with him and choose to go either to Šabac or to Loznica – that was the extent of the freedom of action he had. The column of buses and lorries carrying the residents of Kozluk headed for the bridge on the Drina at Šepak, with soldiers and barricades spaced out along the whole road.

A man by name of Galib Hadžić was wounded at the time. 'Houses were burning around, four, five of them.' Although at the time the witness himself neither saw an incident nor heard of anyone having been abused, on their arrival at Palić near Subotica people spoke of having been maltreated and asked to hand over their money and gold. The witness thus corroborated Banjanović's account of the treatment accorded to the residents of Kozluk during the search.

Describing the atmosphere in the village as people gathered under orders in the communal yard, the witness said that such scenes could not be seen even in the movies: 'The people panicked, and there were lots of immobile folks who were carried around in blankets and carts; the people had already turned loose their animals, cattle, sheep, dogs. It was a horrible sight, the animals howling and yowling because they sensed that something was going on.'

Having crossed the bridge at Šepak, the column continued for Loznica. In Ruma, the passengers were transferred to cattle wagons and taken to Šabac and then to Palić (Serbia). At Palić railway station the wagons were parked on a blind track and the passengers spent the night in them. They were next taken to a collection centre, a field with a barbed wire fence. Everybody entering the collection centre had to give their particulars at a small reception booth at the gate. They were transported to Hungary in groups as they were issued with travelling documents.

### **Examination of witness Bakija Imamović**

The witness, an electrical engineer, worked at the Glinica factory before the war. He lived in Kozluk.

After Serb government was established in Zvornik on 8 April 1992, the Bosniaks were unable to leave Kozluk in any direction. Between then and 26 June the witness never went out of Kozluk.

At the middle of April Bosniaks from Skočić and Šepak arrived in Kozluk in tractors, cars, lorries and other vehicles in order to proceed in the direction of Tuzla. The Kozluk Bosniaks were ready to move too. The Islamic religious leader, Muhamed effendi Lugavić, Bishop Kačavenda, Dr Muhamed Jelkić, and a number of officers and civilians arrived in the village. Although he knew Branko Grujić and Marko Pavlović, the witness was not sure whether they were there too. The Bosniaks were addressed by the aforementioned religious and civil leaders who promised to solve the problems by political means and that all would be well. Given that they were men of authority, the people believed their words, decided not to move and returned to their homes.

### **The expulsion of 26 June 1992**

About 9.30 a.m. the witness was visited by a neighbour woman who said that they must pack their things at once and assemble in the community building yard. 'We were told that our baggage should be as small as possible, a small bag each. We were four in the house, we had enough bags and took with us mostly clothing (jeans, sneakers, jumpers, shirts, underwear, socks, and money).' Shots were fired in one part of Kozluk and smoke rose. Galib Hadžić was wounded on that occasion.

The witness corroborated the evidence of his predecessors that lists of residents moving out were being drawn up at the very entrance to the community building. The eldest member of a family signed himself and gave the number of the household members. On boarding the buses, the Bosniaks were searched by policemen. Although he saw no such incident himself, the witness later heard that some of the residents had been stripped of their money and jewellery.

The witness said that the departure was not voluntary. In common with other Bosniaks, he knew that the shooting incidents in the village had been meant to intimidate and that it was dangerous for them to stay. Therefore the witness could hardly wait to move to a safer place.

**Hearing:** 2 February 2006

**Report:** HLC, Nataša Kandić and Dragoljub Todorović

### **Examination of witness Dragan Ridošić**

The witness arrived in Zvornik late in May or early in June 1992. He came from Tuzla where he worked as a general crime inspector. He reported to the SUP and was assigned to the TO Staff. He reported to the Staff chief, Marko Pavlović, who tasked him with setting up a unit to guard facilities of special interest against possible commando raids and sabotage. These facilities

included bridges, waterworks, hydroelectric power plants, post offices, hospitals, and factories. The witness was appointed commander of the unit.

The unit was a military formation financed by the Municipality.

The witness said he knew nothing about the Čelopek, 'Cigлана' and 'Ekonomija' camps.

### **The expulsion from Kozluk**

The witness often passed through Kozluk on his way to inspect the bridge on the Drina at Šepak for which his unit was responsible. He noticed no barricades along the road.

He met Banjanović about 10 days before the expulsion of the residents of Kozluk. He noticed that Banjanović was a man of authority and that everybody listened to him.

The witness said that the relocation took place because 'the municipal authorities in Zvornik could no longer guarantee security to the residents of Kozluk, so they ought to move to a secure place in Serbia.' According to the witness, the residents of Kozluk moved out voluntarily: '[...] to me it looked as if it was voluntary and a good idea in view of what went on.'

He also said that the relocation decision was taken by the local authorities in Zvornik. Later he heard that there was a lot of looting in Kozluk and that Serb refugees converging from all sides had moved into the Bosniak houses.

### **Observer's notes:**

*The witness's claim that the residents moved out of their own free will does not hold in view of his statement that the removal decision was taken by the local authorities in Zvornik; that an armoured squadron comprising five or six tanks under a certain Branko Studeni arrived in Kozluk on the morning in question; that he was first sent to Kozluk, in the company of some 20 policemen, on 26 June not, as he claimed, to protect the Bosniaks against paramilitary formations but to forestall any protest against forcible expulsion; that Galib Hadžić was wounded in a shooting bout that morning; that the residents were allowed to take with them only personal luggage; that a large number of buses and lorries had been assembled in Kozluk; that the residents were made to sign a list which, the witness later learned, was a statement of voluntary departure; that he and police escorted the refugee convoy as far as the bridge at Šepak, an unmistakable sign that the residents had been forced out.*