



Eye-witness accounts of the evacuation from Srebrenica and the fate of missing colleagues

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**Srebrenica
Hospital Personnel and Local MSF Staff.**

EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS OF THE EVACUATION FROM
SREBRENICA
AND THE FATE OF
MISSING COLLEAGUES.

**A Médecins Sans Frontières Report
February 1996**

Introduction.

MSF surgeons, anaesthetists, medical doctors and nurses had been providing assistance to the patients in the Srebrenica hospital since March 1993 when MSF first entered the enclave of Srebrenica. Despite the difficulties encountered in bringing the necessary materials into the enclave, MSF logisticians succeeded in converting public buildings into accommodation for some 20,000 people who were sheltering in the town. They also managed to rehabilitate the old water purification station on the upper side of the town, thereby ensuring water supplies to a number of neighbourhoods.

The work carried out by our medical and logistical teams would not have been possible without the constant support and solid backing of the staff of the Srebrenica hospital and the local MSF staff.

On 10 July 1995, when the Bosnian Serb forces were on the verge of entering Srebrenica after four days of heavy shelling, somehow the hospital was still functioning. The corridors were crowded with sick and wounded patients and the understaffed surgical team had to operate around the clock. The one available source of help, the medical team with the Dutch UNPROFOR battalion based near the town, refused a request from MSF to provide assistance, so the local and expatriate hospital staff was left to carry on alone, knowing that no outside help would be coming.

On 11 July, the terrorised population fled Srebrenica. In the face of the Bosnian Serb advance, many tried to reach the UNPROFOR base at Potocari while thousands escaped into the forests in the hope of getting through to safer areas.

This report is based on interviews with the staff of the Srebrenica hospital and the local MSF staff covering the events that occurred in the days following the fall of the enclave. They explain how they escaped to safety and what happened to the colleagues who are still missing today.

There were 13 local MSF staff in Srebrenica and the hospital had a staff of 128.

This report is based on the eye-witness accounts of 37 hospital staff and six local MSF staff collected between 27 November and 14 December 1995.

*Of the 128 hospital staff, **21 are reported missing**¹; three were killed in the period prior to the fall of Srebrenica.*

*Of the 13 MSF national staff, **1 is reported missing**.*

Furthermore, MSF is stilling trying to obtain more information on the actual situation of 50 other hospital staff members.

The object of this report is to draw the attention to the fate of the hospital personnel and the local MSF staff and pay homage to their work during the difficult years of war and suffering in the enclave.

It is also intended as an appeal to the organisations and institutions trying to implement the civilian side of the peace agreement to continue their search for evidence and provide justice for those thousands of people who are missing or killed.

MSF urges any individuals or organisation holding information on the staff members reported missing to provide us with this information.

¹ The list of staff members reported missing is included in this report.

Events leading up to the disappearance of staff members.

The missing staff members disappeared during the evacuation from Srebrenica that began on 11 July 1995 and continued over the following days, sometimes weeks.

There seem to have been two main escape routes used by staff members leaving Srebrenica:

- escape on foot through the forests, mostly in groups composed of Bosnian soldiers, civilians and medical staff,
- evacuation to the Dutch UNPROFOR compound in Potocari.

Staff members were evacuated from the UN camp at Potocari in three different ways:

- by convoys evacuating the wounded on 13 July.
- by convoys evacuating civilians (women, children, elderly),
- by the international agencies (MSF, UN, ICRC), 17 July.

1. Evacuation from the UN camp at Potocari

1.1. Evacuation with the wounded

Reported missing: Abdulkadir VELIC.

Abdulkadir was a medical student, born in 1975, who helped at the hospital. Abdulkadir went to Potocari on 11 July and left in a convoy. N.H., who was with him in the convoy, reported: "A Serb major took him out of the convoy. The major didn't believe that Abdulkadir was a medical technician. He said he was either already a soldier, or might become one, "So, I'd better kill you. Anyway, you're a Muslim." I never saw Abdulkadir after that." Another witness reported seeing him around Tisca, where he was tortured and then killed.

Nine of the staff members who provided information for this report left Srebrenica with the wounded. These nine, all women, recounted events as follows.

The evacuation of the wounded, who had been waiting in the UN camp for two days, started on 13 July, around 8 pm. It was carried out with five trucks, one car and one ambulance, all driven by UN soldiers (14 in total, two per vehicle). There were nine nurses in total and one medical technician in the convoy; two nurses took care of the wounded in each truck. The convoy drove off in the direction of Bratunac and was stopped by Serbs in the neighbourhood of Konjevic Polje. The Serbs talked to each driver and then allowed the convoy to continue driving, but without lights.

The convoy reached Tisca around midnight and everybody had to get out of the trucks while the Serbs threatened and insulted them, hitting some of the patients on the legs.

Two nurses, N.H. and E.K., and a medical technician, I.A., testified that nurses and the wounded who were unable to walk were sent back to Bratunac. It was rumoured that they would be taken to Batkovic camp to be used for future prisoner exchanges.

In Tisca, they all had to stand in line, surrounded by Serbs with guns. They were questioned for a long time about their origin, what they knew about the Bosnian army, etc., and all their valuables (gold, money, papers and handbags) were taken from them.

At about 1 or 2 am, a car arrived with more Serbs who took a nurse out of the group and left with her. She was returned after about 15 minutes, apparently without having encountered major problems.

The Serbs then took another woman, F.I., a cleaner at the hospital and kept her for about two hours. A number of people affirmed she was raped by several Serbs. F. returned crying and unable to talk.

The people were made to remain outside for the night, near to the trucks. The next morning, at around 10 am, two cars arrived with three men in them, two wearing black uniform, the third in normal army uniform. They ordered everybody to stand in line while soldiers stood in front of them playing with their arms and threatening them. A major started separating them into two groups: women and people with old wounds (mostly amputees) on one side and, on the other side, freshly wounded people (who might recover enough to fight again), the young *Abdulkadir Velic*, who worked at the hospital as medical technician, and a girl living in Potocari. While the selection was being made, several Serbs and the major were terrifying them with remarks such as: "What we will do with you? Shall we kill you, or rape you?"

The first group composed of nurses and elderly wounded people was sent to Kladanj. There they were released and taken to Dubrave airport by Pakistani UNPROFOR soldiers. Several other nurses were in the convoy: M. A., sister of I., I.O. and E. K..

D.M., also a nurse, was in the other convoy:

"A short time after we reached Tisca, trucks with severely wounded people who couldn't walk were sent back to the "yellow bridge", near Potocari. We had to stay there for a while and then we were sent back to Bratunac."

In Bratunac, the wounded were taken to a hospital and the rest were sent back to Potocari. The staff members finally left with some civilians to go to Kladanj.

The same happened to M.M. and H.S., nurses who worked at the hospital throughout the war.

I.A.:

"In Tisca, when we were outside the trucks, standing in one line, two nurses and the wounded who couldn't walk were sent back to Bratunac. One man came to us asking why we had not gone to Bratunac. He said that now he couldn't do anything for us, but that he didn't care. When the Serbs sent us to Kladanj, they threatened to kill us if we ever went on television and told what had happened to us".

N.H. is a nurse aged 22 who was a refugee in Srebrenica. Her mother has been missing since she was taken by the Serbs in 1993 and a brother has been missing since he tried to escape from Srebrenica with two other brothers through the forest following the fall of the enclave. The other two made it to Tuzla after a journey of two weeks. N.H.:

"In the UN camp, we were kept sitting on the ground in a dirty factory without food or enough water. Everybody screamed when the "Chetniks" came into the camp and I saw many people who wanted to kill themselves they were so terrified of falling into the hands of the "Chetniks". On the convoy, before we reached Konjevic Polje, "Chetniks" stopped us every five minutes. They took some wounded people out of the trucks and nobody has seen them since. The Dutch UN drivers had to hand over their uniforms, guns and money. I saw many "Chetniks" with guns threatening people. Between Konjevic Polje and Tisca, they no longer stopped the trucks. In Tisca, the wounded who could walk were pushed out of the trucks and others were sent back to Bratunac.

"Chetniks" took my bag, documents, gold,... and I was questioned. I recognised some of the Serbs as my neighbours from before the war and one "Chetniks" major recognised me. He asked me a lot of questions and wanted me to go back to Srebrenica. I asked him to let me continue on my way and not make me go back to Srebrenica. He got angry and ordered a soldier to watch me and catch me if I ever tried to escape. Another former neighbour came and talked with me for about two hours, giving me moral help.

In the morning, many more "Chetniks" came. One wounded man couldn't walk anymore, so they beat him to make him stand up and said terrible things to him. They separated people into two groups, the freshly wounded, about 30 people, and about 10 amputees. The medical staff were made to stand up between the two groups. A girl who was raped during the night tried to kill herself (F.). The major asked us our age, if we were married, what we had been doing in Srebrenica, what our jobs were, etc. Then he started to talk with the medical technician, Abdulkadir, saying that he *didn't believe he was a medical technician but must be a soldier. And even if he was not a soldier, he could become one and fight against the Serbs. Anyway, the major said that as he was a Muslim it would be better to kill him.* Abdulkadir had to stay there. I was allowed to get into one of the buses for refugees".

E.K. is 19 years old. She was born in Serbia and was a refugee in Srebrenica, where she worked at the hospital as a nurse for two years. E. K.:

"In Potocari, I was scared all the time. Serbs threatened and insulted us, beating wounded people, frightening them to death. I was with the convoy of wounded, about 80 people. Around 11 pm we reached Tisca, where Serbs came into the trucks, beating the wounded people in the legs. A Serb threatened us with a grenade and made us get out of the trucks and stand on the road, which was already full of wounded people who couldn't walk. These wounded people were carried into trucks and sent back to Bratunac. Serbs then came back to us, asking for money, gold, papers and handbags. They questioned

us again for a long time about our army and our origins. In the morning, we were separated into two groups and sent to Kladanj”.

D.M. is 27 years old. Her husband has been missing since he was captured in May 1992. She has no news of her father since she last saw him in Potocari at the UN compound. D. is a nurse and had been working at the hospital since December 1993. D.M.:

”In Tisca, Serbs stopped the convoy. I heard many screams but I couldn’t see anything. Then a Serb came into our truck, flashing a light in our eyes. He saw one girl who had just delivered and told her to get out. He scared and insulted her and then he started to insult wounded people. Our truck was allowed to leave and we went back to the “yellow bridge”, near Potocari. We stood there for a moment, then we were sent back to Bratunac. Serbs separated the wounded people from the others and we were sent back to Potocari, from where we joined a convoy to Kladanj.

We were stopped on the road to Kladanj and I saw a column of prisoners coming from the forest. There were both soldiers and civilians, about 1,000 people, escorted by “Chetniks”, and they went in the direction of Kravica. In Konjevic Polje, we were stopped again and I saw four buses go past from Nova Kasaba to Kravica. They were full of prisoners. Finally, the convoy was stopped in Tisca and the Serbs told us to walk to Kladanj. I saw a colleague of mine, Abdulkadir, standing with some wounded people and surrounded by “Chetniks”. That was the last I ever saw or heard of him”.

M.M. was a nurse at the Srebrenica hospital during the war. She is 23 years old. In Potocari, her father was separated from the rest of the family and they have had no news of him since then. Her brother has been missing since he tried to escape from Srebrenica through the forest. M.'s husband was captured and sent to the Batkovic concentration camp. He is now supposed to be in Dobojski camp. M.M.:

“In Tisca, Serbs separated the wounded people and I was sent back to Bratunac with the most severely wounded and the nurses. From there, I was sent back to Potocari and after that to Kladanj with civilians. I was lucky because in our truck, two women had just delivered. So I took one baby and the Serbs thought that I was a civilian and not a nurse. The Serbs considered nurses to be in the same category as soldiers”.

M. had a spontaneous abortion when she reached Tuzla.

H.S. is 28 years old and had been working at the hospital as a nurse for the last seven years. H.'s husband, S.S., was a radio technician at the hospital and assisted in giving first aid. He tried to escape through the forest but has been missing since then. H.'s father-in-law has also been missing since he was last seen in Potocari. H.S.:

“In Tisca, some of the medical staff had to get out of the trucks with the wounded. Those who didn’t want to get out were beaten on the legs. I was sent back to the “yellow bridge” in Potocari and had to stay in the truck during the night. Afterwards, we were driven again to Bratunac, in front of the hospital, and some wounded people, women and

children had to go out. The others were sent back to Potocari and from there we took buses to Tisca”.

1.2. Evacuation with civilians

J.B., a twenty-three year old nurse, has had no news of her father and her two brothers since they were separated from her in Potocari. Her husband escaped from Srebrenica through the forest. J. is now in Tuzla with her husband and baby. She left Potocari on the 13 July, in Serb trucks. J.B.:

“We were often stopped on the road and we saw many trucks full of prisoners. On the road from Potocari to Bratunac, people threw stones at the trucks, shouting *“kill the fascists”*. When the convoy reached Tisca, we had to walk to Kladanj. From there we were taken by bus to Dubrave airport and then transported to Tuzla, Srebrenik or Zivinice.”

B.H., also a nurse told, confirmed the stone-throwing. B. is without news of her father-in-law and her husband's brother, who were last seen in Potocari. Her husband took thirty-two days to reach Tuzla after escaping through the forests.

R.T. is 26 and was a nurse at the hospital. Her father was killed in Srebrenica after the evacuation. His body was seen by R.'s husband, D., who is now working with MSF in Tuzla. R.T.:

“Many people went to Potocari, mostly women and children, but also elderly people, wounded people and a few men. UN soldiers said they would protect us. But when I arrived in Potocari, I was “parked” in a factory. It was dirty, without windows and there was almost nothing to eat. Nothing for my baby. People could be heard screaming outside, all over the place. Serbs said many bad things to me and to other people. The UN soldiers were not allowed to give us food or water. They were like hostages in their own camp.

On 13 July, at 5 pm, we had to go to the gate. Men were separated from their families and a group of about 30 “Chetniks” took them away in trucks and buses. Even a 12-year-old boy was separated from his mother. We were taken to Tisca in trucks. On the road, near Kravica, we were stopped. The Serbs were shooting in the forest all around us and firing at civilians who tried to escape. Five buses passed by at that time and people started to scream and cry because they recognised some of their people who had tried to escape through the forest. Then the convoy continued to Tisca”.

M.M. is a 33-year-old midwife who has worked at the hospital for the last 4_ years. M.'s husband and his two brothers escaped through the forest, where there was a lot of shooting and shelling, grenades were thrown at them and they were ambushed. Her husband and one brother made it through. The other brother is missing. Like R., M. escaped with her baby. M.M.:

In Potocari, I had to stay a day and a night in a factory, lying on the ground with about two thousand people. I could hear screams coming from everywhere. There was panic when Serbs entered the camp. I ran to the place where the wounded were lying, feeling more secure there and remained for one more night. The Serbs separated men from women and a lot of men had to stay in the camps. Others were sent off in buses. About four medical technicians from the hospital had

to stay in the camp and I never saw them again. I climbed into a truck which was completely closed, except at the back. Near Kravica, we were stopped. I saw buses passing, full of men, but since then I never heard anything more about them”.

R.A., a 25-year-old nurse:

“I was put in a factory for two days and nights. Although I was insulted several times during these days, nothing really bad happened to me compared to what happened to many of my colleagues”.

E.O. was a refugee in Srebrenica. She is 24 and worked as a nurse at the hospital for about two years. E.’s father was separated from his family in Potocari and they have had no news of him since then. E.O.:

“I didn’t want to stay with the wounded people and went to stand with the women and children, where I thought I would be safer. Two days and nights we stood there, without food, without water, without a place to sleep. The medical staff was treated by the Serbs in the same way as they treated Bosnian soldiers. I managed to get onto a bus, hidden by the women and children”.

N.A. is 26 and was born in Srebrenica. She is without news of her father and her brother, who left Srebrenica with her husband, trying to escape through the forest. N.’s husband made it through, the others are missing. Also missing are her husband’s brother and his children. N. had been nursing at the Srebrenica hospital for three years. N.A.:

“I felt safer hiding myself in the civilian group of women and children rather than staying with the wounded. When we had to get into the trucks, Serbs were shouting all the time “Hurry up!”. I saw one old man who was pushed and beaten and insulted by the Serbs. In Konjevic Polje, I saw many men, most of them naked, escorted by Serbs. I heard a lot of shooting and shelling and civilians threw stones at the trucks”.

N.O.-M. was the head nurse in the surgery department. She is 27. Her husband has been missing since she last saw him in Potocari. Her husband’s father and her brother tried to escape through the forest. Both are still missing. Today, she is staying in a centre in Duboki Potor. N.O.-M. recalls Potocari:

”We were treated like animals; two days in a factory, without water, lying on the ground. The evacuation started on 13 July. Serbs were separating men from women and my husband had to stay there. I don’t know what happened to him. I went in one of the four buses with the women and children. We went to Tisca. In Kravica, near Tisca, a Serb soldier came onto the bus but nothing happened to us. Serbs escorted us until we reached the tunnel near Kladanj. From there we had to walk in a straight line as the Serbs told us that there were mines all over the place”.

When talking about the Dutch UNPROFOR battalion, N. started to cry:

"The UN soldiers were bad. They treated people like animals. We asked for water but they didn't give us anything. They didn't save the male population. My husband asked them for protection but they did nothing. I think there was cooperation between the UN and the "Chetniks". The UN soldiers gave them their uniforms and nobody could know who was who".

S.M. was a cook at the hospital for the last two years. She is 29. Her father was killed at the beginning of the war. S.'s brother tried to escape from Srebrenica through the forest. No news has been received from him since he left Srebrenica. Her sister's husband and his mother were both in Potocari. Today, they are also missing. S.M.:

"I was so scared. I refused to go with MSF, thinking that I would be badly treated by the Serbs. I held a baby and escaped with the women and children. In Konjevic Polje, I saw a lot of men, prisoners, coming from the forest. They looked terrified, exhausted. In Tisca, we had to get out of the trucks. Serbs told us about the mine-fields and said we had to go walk in a straight line".

R.H. was first a nurse on the front line and then a medical technician in the laboratory of the Srebrenica hospital. She is 26. Her husband was killed during the war. Her father and brother had to escape through the forest. Her mother escaped through Potocari. They are all in Tuzla now. She left Srebrenica on foot. R.H.:

"I was so scared in the factory, I cried all the time. I was afraid to stay with the wounded. I couldn't see anything from outside but I heard many screams. Then, a woman came into the factory in shock, completely terrified, screaming how Serbs were killing people, how they were raping women,...how some women alone with children were so scared that they killed themselves. I couldn't believe that because I didn't see it, but I was afraid I would become mad like that woman. Four Serbs came into the factory and I started to cry. A Serb came to me asking why I was crying and assuring me that everything would be fine. When the evacuation of the wounded began, I refused to go with them because I recognised a former neighbour, a "Chetnik". Instead I went with the women and children, holding a baby. I changed my hair and my dress to be sure not to be recognised and I went in a civilian bus. Men tried to do the same, but they were arrested. In Kravica, the buses were stopped. I heard a lot of shooting in the forest. I was thinking that it was the end of the road for me and I took a scalpel in my hand. However, nothing happened. I saw buses passing with men: civilians and soldiers, many of them looking exhausted and frightened".

S.M. was a nurse in the Srebrenica hospital. She left on foot for Potocari with civilian women and children. She was with N.O.-M. We didn't talk with her directly and we haven't any information about her family except that her mother is living with her in Srebrenik.

1.3. Evacuation with MSF - UN - ICRC

Three people interviewed left Potocari on 17 July with the MSF-UN convoy. They were all part of the MSF local staff. They had left Srebrenica on 11 July and went to the UN camp.

Comments

A.P. is 48 years old. He was the main cook and assistant to MSF in the hospital and head of the technical staff. His brother, a soldier, was killed on the front-line and his mother was killed during the war. The rest of his family is alive and escaped between 1992 and 1993. A.P.:

“While I was in the UN camp at Potocari, I could go in and out of the camp to carry wounded people. Once the Serbs arrested me and took me into a room where they ripped off my MSF T-shirt and forced me to read a prepared propaganda for a television camera. It was awful in Potocari; many of the wounded were suffering and others could not even be brought into the camp. A Major gave me hard time going into the camp, even when I showed him my MSF ID card. A certain Major Nikolic was there during the evacuation of the last wounded people, with the Red Cross. They filmed that evacuation, and the patients, ... but the Serbs continued to separate people.

E. S. was working as a translator for MSF since June 1993. She left with the UN convoy. She is now in Tuzla with her mother and her three brothers. She has no news of her father or her uncle who were taken off the bus by the Serbs. E.S.:

“I constantly had to show my MSF ID card while I was in the UN camp. I was insulted and threatened by Serbs and interrogated by Serb soldiers and by Mladic. I was always with the wounded people, taking care of them. C. and I were given authorisation by the Serbs to go out of the camp to pick up some wounded. I saw some Serbs being very aggressive with people and pulling out knives. Once, I heard that a lot of people were killed by knives. C. wanted to go where this had happened, but Serbs told her that nobody would guarantee her security if she went. My father was with me in Potocari. The last time I saw him, he was in the UN compound, in a line waiting to leave. He was taken off the bus by Serbs, along with my uncle. After that, I don't know what happened to them and even now, I have no news. At the end, only a few people were left and the ICRC took them”.

H.K., who was a driver and translator for the MSF team, is 31 years old. All his family were already in Tuzla when he joined them. H.K.:

“We went to Potocari with the wounded. The civilians were in a factory, 500 metres from the UN compound. We made a number of journeys with wounded people, going in and out of the compound. On 12 July, MSF drivers carried in blankets and emergency medical material and helped the elderly to come into the camp. Mladic arrived in the camp in the evening. He allowed nobody to leave, so we all had to stay there. On the same day, the evacuation of the wounded began together with some medical staff. On 13 July, civilians who were waiting in a hangar were evacuated along with those who were in a factory. The medical staff who were evacuated the previous night came back (?). About 50 persons were left: severely wounded and

elderly people. MSF and UN staff carried them to a better place (some of them couldn't walk) and we fed them. ...A commandant at Bratunac wrote down all their names and they were taken away in an ICRC convoy.

I didn't see any massacres but I have seen Serbs burning a part of Srebrenica, "BUDAK". Twice, early in the morning, I saw people forced to get into trucks and sent to Bratunac. An MSF logistician, Meho Bosnjakovic, was not with us. He wanted to stay with his wife and his family. He was in a factory with civilians. The last time I saw him, C. had talked to him but he had decided to stay there. Since that time, nobody has any news of him.

Meho BOSNJKOVIC, was a logistician with MSF. He was born in Nova Kasaba. He has been missing since 13 July when he was taken by the BSA in Potocari. There has been no other news of Meho since then.

Other staff members have also been reported missing since they left Srebrenica for Potocari:

Eniz SEKLEDZIC was a driver at the hospital. He went on foot from Srebrenica to Potocari on 11 July. There has been no news of Eniz since then.

Lutvo MEHMEDOVIC was born in 1966 in Skugrici, Vlasenica municipality. He had been working as a laboratory technician in Srebrenica hospital since 12 July 1992. He left Srebrenica on foot for Potocari on 11 July 1995 under UN protection. There has been new news of Lutvo since then.

Hasan, son of Juso SMAJIC, was born in 1966 in Lipovac, Srebrenica municipality. He finished medical secondary school in Tuzla. He was already working in Srebrenica hospital before the war and since 1992 he was in the laboratory. He left Srebrenica on foot on 11 July for Potocari under UN protection. There has been no news of Hasan since then.

Dzemail HAFIZOVIC was a driver at the hospital. It is unclear whether he left Srebrenica to go to Potocari or if he tried to escape through the forest. Nobody seems to have any information about Dzemail since July 11.

Abid SIRUCIC is an epidemiologist. He was born in 1942. He, too, has been missing since 11 July. According to some, he left for Potocari, but others say he disappeared while escaping through the forest.

Nehrudin SULHEIMANOVIC was born in 1975 or 1976. He was a medical student who was assisting at the hospital. Three people have confirmed to us that he went to Potocari under UN protection and one person, S.A., heard that he was killed (shot) somewhere near Vlasenica.

II. Evacuation through the forest

Nineteen of those interviewed escaped through the forest.

Many of the medical staff, mostly men, chose to escape via the forest and the mountains. They left Srebrenica on 11 July between morning and evening. There were about 15,000 people (medical staff, civilians and a part of the Bosnian Army) who chose this way to escape. Many of them joined hands and formed a long chain as only a few people knew the way through the forest on foot to get to their lines. A large number were killed, wounded or captured during the journey. Conditions were very bad and the convoy was not really well organised. The medical staff had carried with them mostly medical material and there was not enough food or water so people were soon starving. Finally, they ran short of medical material and were no longer able to treat the wounded. Throughout the journey they were surrounded by Serbs, who were shooting and shelling all the time. The convoy was constantly ambushed and many people were lost, wounded or killed. About 5,000 people finally reached Tuzla safely.

Comments

F.D. is 30 years old and had been working as a doctor in Srebrenica for a few months. She is now living with her mother and her young brother in Zenica. Her father died a long time ago. They have no news about some of her uncles who escaped through Potocari. F. D.:

"B. and I walked for six days through the mountains. The BSA was surrounding the long human chain of 15,000 people, trying to break it up so that people lost their way, and the BSA could push them over to the Serb side. Out of the 50 people from the hospital who escaped with me, eight are missing".

B. S. is 33 years old and a doctor. She has no news of her father who escaped from Srebrenica to Potocari. Her mother is in Tuzla and her sister has been living in Montenegro since 1992.

D.R. is Serb, born in Ljubovija. She was working throughout the war as a nurse in an "ambulanta" in Srebrenica. Her husband was in the same convoy out of the town but there were so many ambushes by the BSA that he tried to escape through the forest. Since then, she has no news. Her daughter is with her parents in Ljubovija (near Bratunac). Her brother and sister are in Sambor (Vojvodina). D.R.:

"I was told that Mladic was looking out for me to kill me because I'm married to a Muslim and because a Serb on the wrong side has to be killed".

D.B. is 26 years old. He was a pharmacist in the hospital. His parents and sister reached Potocari where they were separated. His sister and mother were brought to Kladanj by bus, but he has no news of his father. D.B.:

"I was wounded in the left leg by BSA shelling at the beginning of the evacuation; soldiers helped me to reach Tuzla quickly".

N.S. is an anaesthetist and was working in Srebrenica hospital. He is 23 years old. His two brothers were in Potocari; both of them disappeared. He has no news of them or of other relatives. About 15 members of his family

disappeared. His mother was killed at the beginning of the war. He is living in Tuzla with his sister and a cousin. N.S.:

"I was afraid of getting lost in the dark so I kept hold of the hand of a friend. The BSA were constantly shooting, shelling and setting ambushes. I feel very frustrated and I'm angry against the world. I didn't expect UN soldiers to die for us, but at least I expected them to protect us or to help us to escape safely. All they did was to send somebody on 10 July to tell us we didn't have to defend ourselves, that they would protect us and there would be a NATO air attack on the Serb position. Unfortunately, we believed them".

N.S. is 25 years old. He is an theatre nurse and was working in the hospital. He left Srebrenica via the forest together with his father him and a brother. They were both lost during an ambush and he has no news of his father since then. However, his mother, sister and brother survived.

"In the forest, the BSA was shooting and trying to separate us so that we would be completely lost".

I.P. is 31 years old. He is a surgeon and worked for 5_ years in the Srebrenica hospital. One of his brothers disappeared in Potocari. His father died in 1992. His sister escaped in 1993. He is in Tuzla with his mother and his other brother. I.P.:

"We were constantly attacked when we were in the forest. We had many wounded and many died. I went for two days without food. But I've always been psychologically strong and that saved me. Three of my best friends went out of their minds and (too scared?, hallucinations?) killed themselves with a grenade.

I have my own opinion in regard to the Dutch UN soldiers, and I make a distinction between the medical team and the soldiers: the medical staff couldn't do anything. Dr. Kremer did not know about the telex until some time after the UN commandant had sent a reply. However, the soldiers should have protected us, or at least told the international community was happening. On 10 July, at 12 am, medical staff from the hospital had a meeting with some of the town's civilians. We knew that Srebrenica would fall and we were preparing the defence of the town. No matter of how many casualties, we wanted to defend ourselves, we were not afraid anymore. But after the meeting, one UN major came and said that only UN soldiers could defend the town, that civilians were not allowed to do anything, that planes would attack the Serb lines and that the UN would guarantee the safety of Srebrenica. We believed him, but the "Chetniks" were able to reach the town easily the next day. On that last day, the UN troops simply stayed on their base and let the "Chetniks" enter Srebrenica. They betrayed us and more or less handed the town over to the "Chetniks". Some soldiers were really sorry about that but others stopped people who were leaving and told them to go back home! Maybe there was no agreement between the UN and the Serbs, but on the last day they acted together".

A.T. was an theatre nurse and assistant anaesthetist in the hospital. He is 33 years old. His mother, brother, wife and children are in Kiseljak. His father was killed in Srebrenica. A.T.:

"On the first day in the forest we were ambushed, but we managed to escape. Then there was another ambush, and the long human chain

(20 km long) was broken. At this point, there were many wounded and dead people. About 12 of the medical staff were missing and I heard that all of them were killed. Throughout the journey, many people suffered from hallucinations (poison in the water?) and many of them killed themselves, including two of my friends”.

E.V. was a medical technician at the hospital. He is 22 years old. His first cousin, Abdulkadir, is missing - he heard that he was taken by the BSA.

E.V.:

“I walked for six days and nights until I reached Nazuc in territory not controlled by the Serbs. During these six days, I survived ambushes and massacres. I carried wounded people and took care of them. I tried to evacuate them, but most of them died”.

H.J. was medical technician in the hospital for three years. He is 22 years old. His father, a BiH soldier, was killed in Srebrenica. His sister and her husband escaped through the forest. He has no news of them since then. He is in Tuzla with his mother and sisters. H.J.:

“I walked for about 13 days until I reached the territory not controlled by Serbs, near Kalesja. There were many wounded people that we tried to treat, to help, to carry, but the Serbs were chasing us, so we had to leave them in order to save ourselves”.

M.S. is 25 years old. He was a medical technician in the hospital for two years and was a refugee from Bratunac. All his family is in Zevinice: mother, father, sister, wife and baby. M.S.:

“I walked for six days and nights until I reached Nazuk, which was not Serb-controlled. Many people had psychological problems in the forest and there were many suicides. I saw the husband of one of the nurses who had killed himself with a grenade”.

S.M. is a medical technician, working in the hospital in Srebrenica since 1985. He is 29 years old. His father tried to escape with him, through the forest but was lost during an ambush. He has had no news of him since then. His brother, wife and mother are safe in Tuzla. S.M.:

“I walked for five days and nights. I was very scared. There were ambushes all the time, and shelling. ... I was with my father but I lost him during an ambush (and have no news of him since then). I finally reached Nazuk and then went on to Tuzla that evening”.

S.A. was medical technician in the pharmacy in the hospital for more than two years. He is 26 years old. His father tried to escape through the forest but was lost. His sister’s husband is also missing. He is living with her mother, sisters, wife and child. S.A.:

“I walked for four days and nights through the forest. I lost my friends. I saw a mass of dead bodies and I started to look for friends among them. I started to go crazy. I realised that I wouldn’t be able to cross the front-line and I went back to Srebrenica and Zepa.

I saw many people killed and wounded in Zepa. I saw Mladic in Zepa and I heard that there was an agreement to evacuate wounded people, so I took a gun and wounded myself in my leg (left side). A friend of mine, a doctor from Zepa, took part in the negotiations for the evacuation, so I was nearly certain that I could be saved that way. The

agreement was that the wounded would be guaranteed safety to cross the front-line and reach their territory. The first convoy left and it got through successfully. Mladic wanted to show what a good person he is. But after that first convoy, he separated people with old wounds from the freshly wounded people (who might be able to fight again). A doctor came onto the bus (Dr Borolazic) and he guaranteed that I would get through the front-line. The convoy passed the front-line and reached Sarajevo, where we were handed over to a hospital.

I remember that the UN asked the medical staff to go to Potocari, but of course the staff didn't accept - or they would be dead now!"

K.S. worked as a translator for MSF. He was a refugee from Vlasenica, born in May 1965. His father and uncle were killed by the BSA. His little brother was lost in the forest in 1993 when he tried to escape. His wife and daughter are safe in Tuzla. Three of his brothers are in Switzerland and one is in Srebrenik. K.S.:

"Our group was attacked twice, but each time we succeeded in crossing the "Chetnik" line. Many people were wounded or killed".

A.A. is 24 years old and was a midwife in the hospital throughout the war. Her father was killed at the beginning of the war and his brother was killed in the forest. She is in Gracanica with her mother and two sisters. A. A.:

"I saw many terrible things. People were expecting protection from the UN but I saw UN soldiers forbidding access to their camp to women and children. I had the feeling that they were pleased about the fall of Srebrenica, a chance for them to go home. They never even once offered help and they didn't answer our requests for help. When people started to escape from the town, I saw two UN transport vehicles in Kasani ulica, 500 metres from the hospital. The UN soldiers were laughing together and I knew that they wouldn't protect people. So I decided to escape through the forest. The convoy was not planned at all. We organised ourselves in the forest. There were many ambushes, shootings and shelling, with many people wounded and killed, mostly around the Kamenica area (near Kravica). Serbs were shouting: "If you come now, we will not kill your wives and children in Potocari". We were forced to stay there until nightfall, then we crossed the river Jadar, where many people died (from exhaustion or their wounds). We reached the mountains, where we stopped to wait for missing people. Some Serbs put on civilian clothes to make people think that they were civilians and persuaded them to go with them to Konjevic Polje. We had no food, only salt and water. It got worse and worse for us: no food, exhaustion, hallucinations, suicides. In Snagovo, there was another ambush and many people were wounded and killed, but we managed to capture a Serb captain. We had to wait near the front-line as our leaders didn't want to negotiate our crossing over. We heard Bosnian voices on the radio saying they would attack Serb positions, but in the afternoon it started to rain and we were able cross the front-line as the weather prevented the soldiers from reacting. But again we lost many people (killed and wounded). My brother was killed at that time. Our army was in Batkovici and they gave us food."

A.H., a paediatrician, was the hospital director. He is 49 years old. His wife and two children have been in Slovenia since 1992. A.H.:

“We escaped through the forest, but it was badly organised and there was no food, because we weren't prepared for what followed. The UN had assured us that nothing would happen. I saw many wounded and dead people. We walked for days and nights. Many people had hallucinations (poison in the river?)”.

D.I. was a translator for MSF. He was born in February 1973. His wife's father was killed when Srebrenica was taken by the BSA. He is in Tuzla with his father and mother. D.I.:

“I was so scared to go with the MSF convoy. I didn't trust the Serbs. I'm from Bratunac and I knew that Serbs were looking for me, so I escaped through the forest. It was a long journey and I lost the group I was with in an ambush. Then I was alone and came back to Srebrenica after 17 days to try to find another way out. For me it was awful, like a nightmare. I saw the body of my wife's father in the house. I couldn't understand why they killed him; he was old and handicapped. I tried to go to Zepa and Kladanj. On the road, I saw many dead bodies, but the day after, because I had to go back, they were no longer there, but the earth had very recently been packed down - and there was a smell. I would recognise the place again. After two months, I finally reached Tuzla, but Serbs still chase me in my dreams during the night”.

J.B. also escaped through the forest. We met her brother, M.S., but could not speak to her. She was born in 1965 and worked as a nurse in the hospital.

E.A. also escaped through the forest, but one month before the fall of Srebrenica. He was a doctor in the hospital, born in 1960. He is living in Tuzla with his wife. His wife's brother, who had been missing, was found just a few days before we met him.

Staff members missing since the evacuation through the forest

Ramiz HUSEJNOVIC was a watchman at the Srebrenica hospital. He left Srebrenica by foot on 11 July. On his journey through the forest he was in a group composed of Bosnian soldiers, medical staff and civilians. He has been missing since then.

Hasib GURDIC was a cook at the Srebrenica hospital. He left Srebrenica on foot the same day as Ramiz Husejnovic trying to reach safety through the forests. He has been missing since then.

Reuf SALIMOVIC, son of Halid Salimovic, was born in Bratunac on 17 July 1958. He worked at the Srebrenica hospital where he was in charge of the wood and coal. He also worked at the school. Reuf was employed at the hospital since 12 July 1992. He left Srebrenica on 11 July on foot through the forest in a group composed of Bosnian soldiers, medical staff and civilians. He has been missing since then.

Sidik SALKIC, son of Mehmed Salkic, was born in Fojhari, Srebrenica municipality on 2 March 1959. He was working as a medical technician at the Srebrenica hospital since 12 July 1992. He left Srebrenica on 11 July on foot through the forest in a group composed of Bosnian soldiers, medical staff and civilians. He has been missing since then.

Dahmo, whose complete name is so far unknown to us, was a watchman at the hospital. He too left Srebrenica on 11 July on foot, trying to escape from the enclave through the forests. He is reported missing since then.

Avdulah SALIHOVIC was also a watchman at the hospital. He left Srebrenica on foot on 11 July and has been missing since then.

Mehmedalija DEDIC, born in Skugrici Selo, Vlasenica, in 1964, was a medical technician at the hospital. He left Srebrenica on foot through the forest on 11 July and disappeared between Srebrenica and Tuzla.

Senahid SALIHOVIC, son of Suljo Salihovic, was born on 6 December 1964 in Suceška, in the Srebrenica municipality. Senahid graduated from medical secondary school in Zvornik in 1984. He was a radio technician and had assisted in giving first aid at the hospital since May 1992. He left Srebrenica on foot on 11 July and was reported missing in the forest between 11 and 16 July. His father, who left Srebrenica for Potocari camp, is also missing.

Ragib MEHMEDOVIC, is the son of Rasim Mehmedovic. He was born in Suceška, Srebrenica municipality, in 1941. Before the war, he was working in an ambulanta in Suceška. Since 1992, he was a medical technician at the hospital. He left Srebrenica on 11 July on foot through the forest. He has been missing since then.

Zahid HASANOVIC (IBRAHIMOVIC) was born in 1961. He worked in epidemiology and hygiene and was part of the sanitation team at the hospital. He left Srebrenica on 11 July and has been missing since then.

Mirsad GUSIC was born in Bratunac in 1960. He was a medical technician and administrator at the Srebrenica hospital. He left Srebrenica by foot on 11 July through the forest. His brother was with him and recalls that Gusic was terrified by the Serb shelling. Mirsad took his own life with a knife.

Faruk TURSUNOVIC was a son of Jusuf Tursunovic. He was born on 31 December 1961 in Srebrenica. Faruk finished secondary school and worked in a factory producing car batteries in Srebrenica before the war. He had been working at the hospital since 12 July 1992 and was concerned with fuel supplies (wood and charcoal). He left Srebrenica on 11 July on foot through the forest. A massacre took place on the road between Kasaba and Zvornik. There was a lot of shooting and many people were killed. One eye-witness, who was wounded but escaped from this massacre believes Faruk must have been captured or killed at that time.

Redžo BABIC was born in 1967. He was a medical technician at the hospital. He left Srebrenica on 11 July on foot through the forest. Namka Hadzic heard from a witness who saw him killed.

Mirzet SULJIC was born 1976. He was a medical student who helped at the hospital. He left Srebrenica on foot on 11 July through the forest and disappeared on the way to Tuzla. N.H. heard from an eye-witness who said he was wounded and then killed.

Persons reported missing but released or traced

Rasim OMEROVIC was a medical technician at the hospital. He was born in 1974 or 1976. He left Srebrenica on foot on 11 July. He was held in Batkovic concentration camp near Bijeljina, in the Serb part of Bosnia and was released in a prisoner exchange on 24 December 1995.

Nusret JUSUFOVIC was born in 1950 and worked in the field of stomatology. He left Srebrenica on 11 July on foot through the forest. He was captured and held in Batkovic camp and released in a prisoner exchange on 24 December 1995.

Memis MEMISEVIC was a watchman at the hospital. He left Srebrenica on 11 July on foot through the forest, via Sljirovića and Mitrovopolje. He was in an IOM refugee camp and then went to the United States.

Staff members killed earlier in the war

Sulejman PILAV, son of Ismet Pilav, was born in 1962 in Gladovici, Srebrenica municipality. He was on the medical staff of Srebrenica hospital from May 1992. Sulejman was killed on duty on 15 January 1993.

Mujesira IMSIROVIC, daughter of Mujo Imsirovic, was born in 1971 in Rulovci, Srebrenica municipality. During the war she was working in the Srebrenica hospital. Mujesira was killed on duty on 5 October 1992.

NAME	SEX	NAME OF FATHER	DATE OF BIRTH	OCCUPATION IN SREBRENICA
Abdulkadir VELIC	male		1975	medical student
Meho BOSNJAKOVIC	male			MSF logistician
Eniz SEKLEDZIC	male			driver
Lutvo MEHMEDOVIC	male		1966	laboratory technician
Hasan SMAJIC	male	Juso	1966	laboratory technician
Dzemail HAFIZOVIC	male			driver
Abid SIRUCIC	male		1942	epidemiologist
Nethrudin SULHEIMANOVIC	male		1975 or 1976	medical student
Ramiz HUSEJNOVIC	male			watchman
Hasib GURDIC	male			cook
Reuf SALIMOVIC	male	Halid	17 July 1958	worker
Sidik SALKIC	male	Mehmed	2 March 1959	medical technician
Dahmo	male			watchman
Avdulah SALIHOVIC	male			watchman
Mehmedalija DEDIC	male		1964	medical technician
Senahid SALIHOVIC	male	Suljo	6 December 1964	radio technician
Ragib MEHMEDOVIC	male	Rasim	1941	medical technician
Zahid HASANOVIC (IBRAHIMOVIC)	male		1961	epidemiology and hygiene
Mirsad GUSIC	male		1960	technician, administrator
Faruk TURSUNOVIC	male	Jusuf	31 December 61	fuel supplies
Redzo BABIC	male		1967	medical technician
Mirzet SULJIC	male		1976	medical student