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CROATIA

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pound, where families from Sarajevo that Harky and Jim knew were staying. We listened to those families' stories and tried to assess the situation.

Several soldiers from a rehabilitation center (next to Hotel Riviera) came to the hotel about 3 p.m. They entered the reception and urged a receptionist to give a list of Muslim refugees who were staying in that hotel. Policemen came soon, and the soldiers left at that moment with the list. More policemen came to the hotel by 6. At 7:30, about 40 people, including soldiers with weapons, came to the hotel and began threatening children. They said that they would kill



all the Muslims and rape all the Muslim girls. Policemen approached and talked with them. After a while, people, including soldiers, left, saying that they would come back again. About 4 the next morning, some people were walking around the compounds, but nothing happened. There had been discriminations against Muslim refugees inside the hotel. Croats were blocking the cafeteria so that Muslim refugees couldn't eat lunch. One Bosnian Croat woman protested against them but was surrounded by other Croats and yielded as an "enemy of Croats." One Croat teen-ager beat up a small Muslim child. Croats who sympathized with Muslims were scared of helping them.

On the next day, local authorities told Muslim refugees in the Hotel Riviera to move to Obonjan island. When I visited the island, people from the local humanitarian organization said the number of refugees was about 970. The number increased a bit since then, and 90 percent of the refugees were Muslims. In Croatia, ethnic sorting between Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats is going on in refugee camps. The problem is not sorting itself, but I suspect that there is a covert (not official) operation of a hate campaign by Croatian authorities. In a country where one-third of the territory is occupied by Croatian Serbs, its economy needs to be improved. Still, economy is not the top agenda for the government and its privatization policy is half-hearted. People are dissatisfied with the current situation and getting tired of politics. Croatian authorities are seemingly trying to shift people's targets of complaints, and Muslims are one of the best scapegoats. There are now intense fightings between the BiH army and HVO. HVO, like BSA, is conducting ethnic cleansing in Herzegovina. But whenever their attempt is hindered by the BiH army, Muslims are portrayed as "aggressors." The logic is like this: If Muslims keep fighting against Bosnian Croats, Muslim refugees in Croatia have to pay the price. And Croatian authorities want Muslims out of the country or at least from resort

places because the presence of refugees and displaced people is an obstacle for re-development of the tourism industry. Bosnian Croats and Croatian displaced people cannot be removed from the country, so the target is shifted toward Muslim refugees.

The refugee families didn't want to go to Obonja island. There were 17 women and children in those families. Teen-agers belonged to a children's circus, which was introduced and formed by a German circus group when they got a permission to go to Munich some time ago. The German group promised to help them, and they wanted to wait somewhere else until they could get in touch with the group. Muslim refugees in the hotel were to be sent to Obonja at 9 the next morning. Besides these families, none of the refugees wanted to go to Obonja. Harky suspected that there was a deal between local authorities and soldiers because there was too much coincidence in the incident of the previous night. Although the official policy of Croatia has nothing against Muslim refugees, local authorities are not willing to help Muslims, saying, "We don't want any more Muslims. We're Catholics." UNHCR no longer considers that Croatia is a safe haven for Bosnian Muslims. It was very difficult to verify if there was any cooperation between soldiers and local authorities, but we concluded that this thing — forcing Muslims out — would happen all over Croatia with or without using these suspected tactics. In this case, these Muslims were about to be sent to already overcrowded but isolated islands with sanitation and water problems. We tried to figure out what to do.

We went outside with some refugee kids to take a break for a moment. Soon, we got information that someone reported about us to the police. We asked three refugee teen-agers from the families to come with us, and we quickly and secretly went through the woods and got on a van, which was parked in a closed gas station along the main road. We went back to Split with the teen-agers (Saya, Sasha and Jasmin). In Split, there was a camping ground for 2,500 peace activists who were planning to go to Sarajevo. Since it was not well organized, the departure day was delayed. We wanted to ask them to help us because we heard that some of them were not going to Sarajevo. We hoped they could join a protest in front of Hotel Riviera the next morning so Muslim refugees might not be sent to Obonja.

Our attempt to persuade these activists turned out to be a failure. It was around two o'clock in the morning, and they were still having discussions in various places. Few were interested in our stories. The teen-agers appealed to people by singing a song of Sarajevo, but none of them listened or even noticed. Only a few Italian activists responded and said they would come to the hotel in the next morning. They made sure they would not act as

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