

STATEMENT

1. My name is Ilija Babic. I was born in the village of Mokro Polje, municipality of Knin, and I am a Serb as to my ethnicity. My family lived there for generations, and my father and grandfather lived, died and were buried at Mokro Polje.

2. I have two sons and a daughter. I lived and worked in this village since I was born. So, I was there in 1995, too, just before the launching of the operation "Storm". I had a family house at Mokro Polje, and in the center of the village we had a shop run by my younger son and daughter-in-law. Before the "Storm", Mokro Polje had a population of 1,500. They were all Serbs, and the village was not on the front-line but deep inside the territory. Mokro Polje included around 39 small hamlets scattered over the mainly rocky terrain, and had an area of around 70 square kilometers. I was a messenger for Mokro Polje municipality and that is why I knew in person great many local residents, where they lived and what they did for a living, and not only the locals of Mokro Polje but also people living in the surrounding hamlets and villages where I used to deliver mail.

3. When Operation "Storm" started, on 4 August 1995, it was Friday, as I recall, convoy after convoy of refugees passed through Mokro Polje. On Friday evening and until Saturday morning, the shelling coming from the direction of Grahovo could be heard. My sisters-in-law and my seven grandchildren, as well as many other residents of Mokro Polje, joined the refugee convoys fleeing Mokro Polje, in passenger cars, in the evening on 4 August. I didn't want to leave with my sisters-in-law before finding out where my sons were. My two sons, who were on the front-line, left their posts and came to our family house, one during the night and the other on the morning of 5 August.

4. My sons tried to persuade me to go with them, but nevertheless I decided to stay at home and to not leave my property and animals. As a little boy, during World War II, I survived the persecution and all the sufferings of life in exile and did not want to go through that ordeal ever again or leave the graves of my ancestors. On the other hand, at my age I did not want to accept the fact that no one remained in the village to witness the events that would follow.

5. On Saturday afternoon, I met with Mirko Muzdalo, Manda Kanazir, Jandreja Kostic, who also remained behind at Mokro Polje, and we agreed to check who of the residents remained in the village. We found out that about 64 residents stayed in the village and they all spent the night hiding in their homes.

6. On the morning of 6 August, one of the local residents who remained behind, Jovan Japundzic, told me that the Serbs who were fleeing in a convoy broke into my store in the center of the village, so we set off to see if any food supplies remained on stock there. On that morning, the village was cut off from the supply of electricity. In the center of the village, around 11 a.m., I saw Ruza Babic (born in 1926), who also remained behind because she had undergone a surgery and used crutches and could hardly walk. She begged me to take her with me but I did not have a car, so I told her that I would come the following day, if I managed somehow.

7. On Sunday afternoon, on 6 August, I sighted the Croatian army approaching our village from the direction of Knin and I saw fire and smoke coming from that direction, more precisely from the village of Padjene which was in front of Mokro Polje. I could see that the

house of Milica Japundzic was the first house set on fire at the entrance to the village. Around 5 p.m., I saw Croatian tanks come up to the wood very near my house. Sava Babic (born in 1921) and I hid in a smoke house with a double ceiling which served as a shelter. From there, I heard Croatian soldiers saying that they had found the keys to my house but that there was no one there.

8. When I heard the tanks advancing to the centre of Mokro Polje, I came out of the shelter and headed towards the center of Mokro Polje, still hiding. When I came to the village centre, I saw Croatian soldiers firing at a yellow tractor which was descending into the village. Soldiers in camouflage uniforms captured three people unknown to me, and led them to the center of the village. At nightfall, I returned to my house where I spent the night.

9. On the morning of Monday 7 August Manda Kanazir, whose house was in the center, came to my home to tell me that Ruza Babic was killed along with another person in my shop and that their bodies were burned down. When I reached the centre, I saw the body of Ruza Babic right at the entrance to the hall of her house and the body of Stevan. Sucevic lying on the street near the home of Stana Sucevic. Inside my shop there were burnt bodies on the wooden pallets, but I could not say how many of them and who these killed people were. Later on, I found out that among these people there were Steva and Ruza Manojlovic and Sava Trazivuk, whose bodies were found after the war at the Knin cemetery.

10. That same Monday morning, Croatian soldiers were in the village of Popovic. I found this out when Mirko Muzdalo came to my house on Monday night and told me that Stana Popovic and her sick son Mirko were killed in their home in that village that morning, while Obrad Popovic, Stana's husband was wounded. Immediately after the Popovic family was killed, the remaining residents of that and surrounding village hamlets, about 23 of them, sought shelter at the UNPROFOR base, where the Kenyan contingent was stationed in Supljaja. I also heard from my neighbor that the house of Demir Milan was set on fire and that he was killed near the house, which was located in Boltica Ograda. We didn't have time to bury him properly and just put the tent canvas over his body and piled up soil over it. All these murders I have described occurred during the first few days after the Croatian forces entered. At that time, around 40 residents, out of 1500, of Mokro Polje remained behind (of approximately 60 whom we counted on the first day when 20 people fled from Popovic) including those killed. The survived residents mostly hid in their homes and in the woods, as I did, and I think that is why they were not killed.

11. The next time I saw Croatian soldiers was a few days later; they put up a checkpoint in the centre of Mokro Polje. Then, 7 Croatian soldiers came to my house and I was forthcoming to them. They searched my house inside out on that occasion. UNPROFOR soldiers arrived around 15 August and I, together with them, searched for and collected corpses in several villages, and we communicated with the help of their interpreters. The neighbors told me that UNPROFOR troops were not allowed in before and that they came when people were already dead and their houses burned down. Around this time, the members of the Croatian forces collected corpses from the village and as I recall, Manda Kanazir, who was there, told me that it was only then that the 6 burnt bodies that I saw a few days earlier, were taken out of my shop.

12. On the Feast of the Assumption, 28 August 1995, the Croatian police inquired about Sava Babic and I took them to her house where, in the front garden, in a "Fica" car, we found the body of Sava Babic (born in 1913), and I saw that she had two gunshot wounds to her head.

13. On 19 September 1995, with the assistance of UNPROFOR, we found Jeka Kanazir (born in 1928); her corpse was in a well near her house in the hamlet of Kanazir. In the hamlet Zavođe, we found the body of Ilija Bjedov (born in 1930), and an unidentified body, who we first thought was a man from Benkovac. They were buried on 21 September 1995. I don't know exactly the cause of Ilija Bjedov's death, but the unidentified body was hit by a shell or a bullet put through the head because the head was fully open.

14. I know that during and after the operation 'Storm' 53 residential properties and about 15 commercial buildings were burned down, and as I estimated, thousands of goats and sheep and hundreds of pigs were killed and laid all over the places for days, after the "Storm". All the animals started to rot and smell as well as the refrigerators in the houses because electricity was out in the whole village, and the Croats began collecting animal carcasses only around 15 August, after the bodies had been taken out of my store. It was only a year later that electricity was reconnected to the village. Some of the hamlets near Mokro Polje were destroyed even more extensively than Mokro Polje itself, like the hamlet of Prevljes which was completely burned and destroyed. There was no military facility or installation in or around Mokro Polje.

15. On 7 August 1995, when I saw soldiers in camouflage uniforms, I did not see their insignia but I saw, during those days, written in large letters by paint "4th Guard Split Brigade" on the wall of my shop. Later, when they occupied the center of the village, the soldiers told me that they were from the Split Brigade of the Croatian Army.

16. Today, there are fewer than 10 people living in Mokro Polje, of those who remained behind and survived the operation "Storm".

I am giving this statement out of my free will to the Agent of Serbia before the International Court of Justice and I agree to appear as a witness in the proceedings before the Court. I have read the statement and accepted it as my own.

In Surcin, Belgrade, 4 March 2013

Signature: (signed)